THE TRAGEDY OF SENTIENCE

THOMAS SHELDON MACDONALD

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PREFACE

How the great tragedy of mankind is found through sentient awareness.

Humanity is, and has always been at a crossroads whereby the awareness of the futility of our lives continuously grows as time passes. What I mean by this is that throughout the natural course of life, it becomes quickly apparent that we are temporal beings etching out for ourselves an existence that is likely futile for the sake of living. Mankind does not often reflect enough on just how savage the world around us truly is. Though there is beauty to be found in the song of a bird, that same animal is predatory in nature and possesses those traits which would seem to be destructive.

Charles Darwin, in his eponymous work *The Origin of Species*, puts it thusly: "We behold the face of nature bright with gladness, we often see superabundance of food; we do not see, or we forget, that the birds which are idly singing round us mostly live on insects or seeds, and are thus constantly destroying life; or we forget how largely these songsters, or their eggs, or their nestlings, are destroyed by birds and beasts of prey; we do not always bear in mind, that, though food may be now superabundant, it is not so at all seasons of each recurring year."

There is always a sense of the limited nature of resources, as well as of our nature. Our ability to utilize the will, limited though it is, is one example among many of the futility of human existence. This is not to say that certain philosophies cannot find something worthy in human life, but

when focusing on the void of the conceptualization of the eternal, it becomes apparent that we are extremely insignificant in the grand scheme of things.

Sentience is merely a tool that has been developed for us to survive a harsh world full of predators, and prey. We possess, for whatever reason, an awareness of our own mortality, though we press on in our quest for survival. In the abyss of our predilection toward survival, we are always moved by the desire toward self-annihilation. This is present in us through the expression of art, and other media that attempts to reconcile the subconscious with the objective in the world. What I mean by this is that although there is a strong sense of survivalism that penetrates through the heart of humanity, there is also a tremendous drive toward the unknown.

In our expectations of life, there are many pitfalls to be experienced, namely those things which we thought we could do but never had the chance, or opportunity to do so. These expectations bring great sorrow to us on an individual level because the lack of completion of a desire leads to the active awareness of the temporal nature of things. To clarify, what I mean is that when we are not able to do something, or express something, we are engaging actively in our own awareness of death as a tangible reality. This engagement brings us closer to death in a way that is wholly intimate, and personalized toward the individual.

Our awareness of death is subjective, though we are wholly aware of the science behind the phenomenon. This subjectivity is powerful in that it is manifested as being a tremendous boulder on our collective shoulders, as we all experience it in some unspoken way. The frustrations that we experience in life can be boiled down to the fact that our understanding of death is so limited in nature. We can see the scientific facts, know how the objective nature of death comes about, and just how we die on a naturalistic level. Yet, we are still compelled to become obsessed with our own deaths in a way that informs our waking experiences. Nonetheless, we press on in our daily lives in a way that keeps us from actively experiencing the true horrors of what awaits us in death.

Perhaps it would be better that we did not have knowledge of the future, and what it could possibly hold for us. It is through knowledge that we find ourselves in a position whereby there is an endless abyss of unanswered questions that lead to mental suffering. The more we are aware of our predicament, the closer we are to knowing just how limited our lives truly are. This is the crux of the matter; that the very heart of humanity is found in the tragedy of sentience because we can see possibilities, but we do not know the outcome of our situation even if we are to look at the likelihood of something specific happening.

There is a grotesquery of possibilities that exist when it comes to human consciousness. We are acutely aware of just how fragile we are when we think deeply on those things which affect us daily. Charles Darwin, in his observations on the scarcity of resources, describes just how markedly we are at the mercy of circumstances beyond our control. We are born with specific resources to take care of ourselves in whatever capacity we can, but there are few things that can be done to rise above our quandary.

Still, we press on in the race toward oblivion through our goals, actions, ideals, and thoughts on posterity. We wish to leave a legacy wherever possible, and sometimes this is done through several various means. Some people have children, others write books, still others find a purpose in a career or in caretaking. All these things exist to serve as a means of communication with the outside world. We are a desperate species in a frantic search for that which can bring us even a small taste of immortality.

When we think deeply about sentience, we come to the realization that everything we do involves an inner, and outer expression of the self. The self, being a construct of experience, conditioning, and interaction with others provides a conduit whereby we can manifest our subjective insecurities upon the outside world. What I mean by this is that all we can see in life is consciousness as it is, but not as we originally expected it to be. This is another facet of the great tragedy of life as it is exposed to us.

INTRODUCTION

Why I have decided to write about the heaviest of subjects, next to death; that of the tragedy of sentience.

Consciousness is the greatest enigma known to mankind. It is so massive that we are still trying to find an answer to the depths of what it represents for us, and other sentient beings. It is through consciousness that we find ourselves at a precipice whereby we are forced to investigate our own existence moment by moment. The introspective individual sees their life flash before their eyes as those do in their dying moments on a relatively consistent basis. This is of course a psychological weakness, but one in which it is necessarily tied in with trying to make sense of consciousness.

There is a heaviness of sorts when it comes to trying to define the limits of consciousness, because we are still so uncertain of what it might consist of. Just how far are we able to take sentience within the scope of our objective world? How much knowledge is possible to gain from studies on consciousness? These questions are no doubt puzzling, but they are necessary to ask in the case of searching for meaning in all the confusion that life presents to us.

I argue that sentience is truly a tragedy, for it contains (in our case, as a species) the foreknowledge of death, the great unknown. It is through consciousness that we find ourselves daily tasting of death, though in doses so small as to only affect us somewhat mildly on a psychological level. What I mean by this is that we are touched by death in a way that informs our every waking moment, and decision-making processes as well.

Man's knowledge extends to that of the conceptualization of death, and impermanence. This much has been established. For if we did not possess knowledge of death, we would not be in such a state of tremendous suffering at the prospect of any possible action against us. Of course, we would also not be human, because it is through our grip on objectivist reality that allows us to see life for what it really is; a temporary experience.

In this objectivity (which we must obey because we all experience the laws of physics the same way), we must understand that all things are temporal, life included. It is through this understanding that we can then address these questions regarding life, and its temporal nature. When we consider that we have anywhere between eighty to one hundred years to live (at best), all our concerns should be on the temporal through the advancement of individual thought. To clarify, I mean that we should focus our attention on the advancements of those who have come before us so that we can build upon them for our own benefit.

Advancements in thought allow us to penetrate deeply into the heart of what it truly means to be human. These advancements include scientific discoveries, philosophical ideas, and general forward-thinking progressivism found throughout society as it advances into a new age. Through the combination of each of these aspects it becomes clear that we have at least somewhat of a foundation to rest our minds upon. This foundation is built upon centuries of human progress through each of the epochs that forged the modern mind in a scientific manner. The individual has always been at the center of this progressivism because it is through subjective experience of what life holds for us that we can come to an objective understanding.

There must be a balance struck between the discoveries of the subjective, and objective mind (when relating to consciousness) because we are bound to certain truths that unfold before us as we mature. We learn that we can get hurt if we fall, and eventually we learn that it is possible that we may die of any number of occurrences that befall us.

We can choose of course to avoid such discussions, and blissfully allow our consciousness to be sublimated into the current world in which we live. Distractions, ideals, thoughts, and superficial pursuits all allow us to alleviate to some degree the horrors of existence. The great philosopher Emil Cioran describes in *A Short History of Decay* the great frivolity of these distractions quite succinctly. For Cioran, "No one achieves frivolity straight off. It is a privilege and an art; it is the pursuit of the superficial by those who, having discerned the impossibility of any certitude, have conceived a disgust for such things; it is the escape far from one abyss or another which, being by nature bottomless, can lead nowhere."

This frivolity of spirit is one in which it is easy to fall into for any one of us. We live in a world of constant distractions, of which none find their fulfillment in a lasting way for us. Nonetheless, we keep on pursuing these frivolities in such a way as to religiously follow them until our final days when we are forced to confront our mortality. This is another aspect of the great tragedy that has befallen us upon our births. Perhaps this is another way that our nature allows us to focus on survival through the denial of the possibility of death, and what it truly entails.

We experience a dichotomy between the drive to survive, and the death wishes we all secretly desire in our subconscious minds. This dichotomy is brought about by the unquenchable desire of the will to manifest itself in such a way as to bring about a form of immortality which is impossible to realize. Some of us create sculptures, others write, and still others seek to serve the greater humanity through scientific breakthroughs, and medical advancements.

As we consider all these things, we must be willing to realize the fact that even our most profound accomplishments are without merit in the face of the gigantic void that is eternity. Let us be reminded of those ancient kings, queens, adventurers, and artists that are becoming more obscure as time goes on. We read about them in books, listen to their stories through word of mouth, and consume media about them, but they are also subject to the sands of time.

Our lack of understanding of the supposed purpose of life, save through our own foolhardy attempts at answering this question, provides a means by which we delve further into an internal madness of sorts. Certainly, from a biological perspective, our purpose is clear; to procreate, and survive while we are of sound mind or ability. From a subjective perspective this is a completely different story. We are complex creatures, and require several levels of experience, ideal, thought, and action that work in tandem to justify our existence on a consistent basis.

The main question I pose in my theory is that there is no fullness of joy to be found through the biological processes of procreation, nor is there a higher religious meaning that can be deciphered as providing the foundations for a purposeful life. We can, like the existentialists, create meaning where there is none, but that is only one aspect of survival that we must consider. The other end of the spectrum, existential despair, cries out for justification in a way that cannot fully be solved by our etched-out lives in modern society.

Entertainment, gainful employment, family, and friends do not possess the fullness of what is necessary to avoid the madness of the void. If anything, these things merely provide a way for us to live in a daily way that does not account for tomorrow. What I mean by this is that even though we may plan, there is no guarantee that there will be one for us. It would seem as if those who are intellectually unprepared for death will experience it as a horrifying rite of passage when it comes for them.

To clarify, I mean that those that do not reflect on death will eventually find themselves confronted with a traumatic experience (assuming a natural or disease-based death that is drawn out is happening). Those that reflect on death on a consistent basis are likely to be psychologically (at least to a degree) prepared for the inevitability of our own decline. Perhaps this is one of the keys to finding meaning in life; that our reflections on death become acute enough for us to take each day that is given to us that much more seriously.

We are continuously battling an internal conflict which consists of the desire to survive, and the will to die. This conflict is apparent in how on a socio-cultural level we resort to war, and violence where logic, and reason fail us. To clarify, we exacerbate situations internally because we are in constant conflict with ourselves, and the world around us. The world represents an outer manifestation of the internal struggle that each one of us experiences on a daily level. Conflicting ideas, religious beliefs, economic statuses, and psychological makeups all serve to make worse the situation in which we find ourselves culturally, and personally.

As the world finds itself amid violence, war, greed, and poverty, we can see the asymmetry that exists between all people throughout the world. This asymmetry is a part of what makes life a nightmare in that it is at a seeming roll of the dice where we will end up, or come from through our births into this world. This is the harsh reality which we must all face, and it is made apparent even more succinctly through other facets of suffering such as birth defects, neurological disorders, and mental illness.

So, what can we make of all this disorder that exists in the world? How do we reconcile our place in the world with the chaos that never seems to end? These are questions that puzzle even the greatest of minds, and it seems that all we have in the end are theories to rely on. Our foundations on life are shaky at best, and disordered at the worst of it all.

These disorders of life manifest themselves in such a way as to penetrate the very essence of what makes us human. To clarify what I mean is that it is through our disorders that we find ourselves balancing our convictions, and ideals, versus the awareness of death, and the fragility of life. This fragility is present with us at times, but not always, for if it were we would be afraid to do just about anything that could possibly harm us. It appears we have a selective awareness that allows us to complete tasks either big or small without completely mentally breaking down due to the grim facts of life. The facts are inclusive of death, but not limited to its awareness.

There is a disconnect found between the conduct of individuals, and the reliance on instinct which exists within us to this very day. According to Dr. Sigmund Freud, in *Reflections on War and Death*, "Civilized society, which demands good conduct and does not bother about the impulse on which it is based, has thus won over a great many people to civilized obedience who do not thereby follow their own natures." We must examine this statement further, and dissect it in a way that is relevant to ourselves.

The examination of the bases for our conduct within society shows that there is a disconnect with our instinctual natures, and the obedience for which we must account for in our daily lives. This disconnect creates a form of dichotomy that can be compared to the subjective, and the objective world. Our subconscious holds a deeply experienced primitivism that is informed by our history of behavior, surroundings, and personal beliefs.

When we consider the implications of the disconnect between primitive instinct, and the conformity by which we are forced to participate in, there is a tremendous sense of frustration that expresses itself through various negative emotions. This is a psychological take on the idea that we are always at the edge of expressing violent emotions because of inner mental frustrations. This is not to say that most people are prone to this consciously, it is just that there is the unconscious visualization of these concepts that occurs in our minds due to the suppression of the primitive.

In the profundity of our experience as human beings we must be aware of the contrasts, contradictions, and possibilities of annihilation as it is found through experiences in life. We are randomly placed in this world with a wide variety of resources either available, or unavailable to us. This is an apparent truth based on what can be observed throughout various societies in real-time. The focus on primitivism through invoking the instinctual impulses within us is a way to elicit positive action. When we look beyond the barriers society imposes on us, we are looking actively for the self-agency that will justify our existences.

CHAPTER ONE

How the experience of death informs us on a primitive level.

We have found ourselves amid death awareness, which never truly goes away once one of our race tastes of it. Humanity is seemingly compelled to create mythologies that deal with our fear of imminent death. We are continuously reaching into the subconscious for the solidification of ideals, values, and traditions which manifest themselves in the objective world. Dr. Sigmund Freud, in his essay *Reflections on War and Death,* proclaims that mankind is transformed fundamentally by the experience of death.

For Dr. Freud, "Man could no longer keep death away from him, for he had tasted of it in his grief for the deceased, but he did not want to acknowledge it, since he could not imagine himself dead. He therefore formed a compromise and concealed his own death but denied it the significance of destroying life, a distinction for which the death of his enemies had given him no motive. He invented spirits during his contemplation of the corpse of the person he loved, and his consciousness of guilt over the gratification which mingled with his grief brought it about that these first created spirits were transformed into evil demons who were to be feared."

There is a powerful experience found in the death of a loved one, for it provides a catalyst for intense inner encounters that are based on the awareness of death as a reality. This intensity of experience is such that we must be humble before how it affects us in our own lives. If we are not careful, the mythologies we create can destroy us on a fundamental level.

The primitive informs us that our very essence is based on pure survival instinct, as well as the furtherance of the human race. This is one way of looking at things. Another angle, while no less valid, is that beyond the primitive lay those thoughts, ideals, possibilities, and dreams that inform humanity of profound conceptualizations of being that are beyond our current understanding. We are bound to biology, but we also *think*. This is where things get interesting for us because we are just as captivated by the laws of nature, as we are by our own conscious, (and unconscious) thoughts.

Our reliance on instinct, though diminished through societal conditioning, is still strong enough to inform us on a fundamental level. We turn away from death as though it were possible to completely avoid our passage from this world through it. Our ancestors invented spirits to deal with the death of a loved one because ordinary language is not sufficient to express the depths of mourning properly. The symbolic, then, becomes the highest expression of mankind in the throes of mourning. This is a powerful experience which ultimately has no way of being expressed save for individual subjectivism.

The symbolic is experienced in tandem with the objective, biological facts of life. It is through both experiences that we share with each other the fullness of what it means to be human. The subjective is necessary because it allows for an expression (at least interiorly) of those things which the will is not able to perform due to circumstances beyond one's own control. The objective keeps us grounded in what I call *base reality*. Base reality is where we have shared experiences that are tangibly observed in a way that can be seen as part of the physical world.

In the shadow of our own mortality, we have a need to fulfill those aspects of the self which are constructed in such a way that there is no outlet for representation other than thoughts. What I mean by this is that the inner self, even though it is constructed by environmental, and natural forces, needs to be able to express abstractions in order to cope with death.

How are we to address the underlying aspects of death awareness, with our current condition as sentient beings? This is a question, like many before it, that has no easy answer. It is through the awareness of death that we are informed of how, in a strange way, we should live. To clarify, I mean that death forces us to adapt in ways that are both intuitive, and counter-intuitive toward the drive for survival. There is a focus on self-annihilation through living the experience of survivor's guilt, whereby the individual cannot continue living in the same patterns that they were accustomed to. Some people focus on old (or new) mythologies to cope with the fomenting reality that is unfolding before them. Others look to science, where there are logical, rational answers for biological processes that take place outside of one's own control.

The key word here is control. There is no control when it comes to accepting death as a reality. We must bear it in a way that our primitive minds allow it to be manifested without destroying who we are on a fundamental level. This is a means of self-protection, as well as self-annihilation, for there are layers of individual unconsciousness that we are dealing with here. Some of these layers are destroyed through a process of self-harm through either mental, or physical means. Others are destroyed by environmental manifestations of logic through attempts at rationalizing the experience of death.

Popular psychology would suggest against any expression of self-annihilation, at least from a physical (and partially mental) mode of action. This is all good and well, for the survival instinct has a logical, rational institution whereby the individual can find some form of succor for their otherwise dolorous situation. We cannot, however, deny that there is a death drive working in tandem with those forces of the will towards living. These dual forces can provide, if looked at rationally, a way for the individual to shed the unnecessary considering the need for emerging from suffering as a new person. This is perhaps why resurrection myths are so popular in traditional religions. There is power behind the rising of the self in a way that a phoenix is said to rise from the ashes.

History is full of examples of the despair that humanity is forced to contend with. Whether it be through the loss incurred through warring states, individuals fighting one another, and nations falling to the wayside through poverty, there appears to be a never-ending cycle of suffering eminent within the human experience. Leibniz, in his work entitled *New Essays Concerning Human Understanding,* focuses on the lack of balance we all seem to be experiencing as human beings. There is a form of uneasiness that travels through our very veins; forcing us to comply with the inevitability of whatever life decides to throw at us.

For Leibniz, human desires, the will, and unsatisfied idealism is to blame for much of our suffering. He states that, "But to return to uneasiness, that is to say to the little imperceptible solicitations which keep us always in suspense; these are confused determinations, so that often we do not know what we lack, while in the case of the inclinations and passions we at least know what we ask for, although confused perceptions enter also into their methods of acting, and the passions themselves also cause this uneasiness of longing."

Perhaps it is through this longing that we find ourselves at the mercy of our own minds. It seems as if we can never be satisfied, especially when it comes to the acceptance of death as a reality in our lives. There are questions that continuously plague us until our own dying breaths, and answers that are sometimes wholly unfulfilling in the eyes of the individual.

Distractions can only guide us so far, particularly when it comes to healing after a great loss of life. Hobbies, passions, work, and other diversions can only help us avoid the truth of our sentence given to us by life. We need to come to a rational conclusion based on our own acceptance of death from a psychological, scientific, and subjective range of aspects. What I mean by this is that there needs to be a form of balance that keeps us from self-destructing in the face of death to continue to find a reason to live. Whether a person focuses on religious belief or no is beyond the scope of this book, but from this author's standpoint it is often damaging to do so without considering all angles.

Our internal conflict with ourselves is overshadowed by the looming knowledge that is ever expansive regarding the human condition. We live, we survive, then we die. These are the facts as they lay out before us. Yet, there is something within the very core of mankind that desires for a purpose to these grave events. It is through suffering, want, and loss that we become closer to those aspects of life which penetrate the very heart of humanity. We may be destined for the grave, but there could be a fundamental purpose we are just missing out on. What that purpose is we cannot know; save for those futile attempts we must create meaningful experiences in our own lives.

Meaning is created through trial, and error. We experience joy as an interlude between the heavy weight of suffering, even if it does not last long for us. This is another tragedy of humankind; that there is a continual leverage between suffering, and not-suffering to be had. This is the great nightmare in which we find ourselves stuck perpetually.

There is a seemingly endless barrage of positive, and negative, experiences that we go through daily. If we are not killed by these experiences, we soon wish we were through the boredom of non-suffering. We are continuously on the precipice of change, and if we are unable to keep up with it by way of some internal psychological process, we become victims of our own minds.

This victimhood is, of course, reversible, but only for a period in one's life where there is relatively decent health, and cognitive abilities to function properly. When we are in deficit of either of those things, living becomes at times too much to bear. This possibility is a prime example of how important it is to reflect on those things which our outside the realm of our control. By reflecting, we allow ourselves to become humbled in the face of our own tragic natures.

In this new dawn of science that we find ourselves in, there are even more questions than before that arise when it comes to consciousness. How does our consciousness change in the face of death? This is

something that no doubt has neurological processes related to coping mechanisms of the individual in question, but there are certainly subjective processes happening simultaneously as well.

The knowledge we possess of death paradoxically enhances our desire to learn various disciplines, inclusive of that of scientific pursuits. When we focus on the biological aspects of the dying process, we inform ourselves of something that has both a curious as well as rational approach toward death. Education, therefore, is of the utmost importance when it comes to the psychological awareness needed to process loss, and grief. We must not allow our subconscious minds to dominate the fullness of our experiences with death, but at the same time, we must give it space to be expressed in a beneficial manner.

How we express ourselves in the face of loss holds great weight in the process of healing on a psychological level. When we come to terms with the actual truth behind death, we can then attempt to reconstruct ourselves on a fundamental level. It is through the many stages of grief that we recollect our connection toward others, and look forward to new possibilities. These possibilities keep us balanced on the tightrope between the survival instinct, and the death impulse. Our focus on coping skills allows us to redirect the energies latent in grief toward an end which is primarily healthy.

Returning to the concept of victimhood, we must realize that even our attempts at fruitful renewals of being are not always successful. To clarify, I mean that sometimes grief can be so overwhelming that it does not allow for the individual to properly contextualize it in a way that allows for maximum personal benefit. We can become lost in our subjective minds, and look at death in a way that is imbalanced, and full of angst. Even the highest educated among us are subject to this possibility, for it is through the subjective that we find a measure of understanding of those biological forces which must be reckoned with. In our darkest of days, it is here where we must find ourselves in an empty space, ready to become something different than we were before.

The Romanian French philosopher Emil Cioran, in his work *A Short History of Decay,* emphasizes the unpopular notion that it is perhaps life itself that is the most mysterious to us. Death comes for us when it comes for us, but it is through life that we are captivated by unknown possibilities. For Cioran, it is "By dint of accumulating non-mysteries and monopolizing non-meanings, life inspires more dread than death: it is life which is the Great Unknown." Perhaps Cioran is on to something here, in that it is through life that we are in the midst of a great dread that is inescapable.

Our experiences in life are sometimes exemplary of how we cannot predict everything that happens to us. In fact, we have very little that we can control other than our own emotions, and actions towards things we must face. Our internal world, the subjective one, is continuously working in overdrive to produce a fictional version of the world where we are not as fragile as we truly are. Without this fictional version of the world, we would be as without a compass in life. We need distractions in order to keep us functioning on a level that coincides with the objective, and rational.

The dichotomy between the subjective, and the objective then becomes thinly divided due to personal experience. It is through the mind that mankind finds itself at the edge of a great abyss in that we are continually vying for control over something which is not ours to constrain. Life, being the greatest of all mysteries besides death, is functional in that we are the whole of our experiences rather than just aspects of a shattered being. What I mean by this is that the subjective, and artistic, are just as valid as the scientific, and objective when it comes to creating a pattern of a balanced life.

Nonetheless, we are still finding ourselves at the edge of a great precipice. It is here that science, and the subjective meet. The human mind, filled with fancies of possibilities, and chance, is never truly satisfied with any of the findings of either a subjective, or objective nature. Both provide nothing but angst, and anguish on behalf of the individual. We are encased in a biologically deficient body, with many ailments we have yet to discover as the cause of our melancholy in this world.

CHAPTER TWO

The great tragedy of humanity is that we are all too aware of our destiny which is that of the grave.

When we interact with others, we are partaking in a form of decay that is unspoken, and unknown. This decay is due to the temporary nature of experience, and memory. We experience something suddenly, then it passes to our memory just as quickly. Everything around us shows us these signs of decay, from the biological processes through the daily interactions we have with one another.

Our destiny, which is that of the grave, is of partial concern here when we discuss decay in its temporal form. It is something which is always in the back of our minds, whether we are conscious of it, or no. Decay, in this sense, does not equate exactly to the biological phenomenon, but it does have something in common with it; that of expected change through processes known to us through observation. We can observe ourselves psychologically when we choose to become aware of just how many experiences there are that become nothing but an afterthought.

In the chaos of daily existence with all the preoccupations that arise from it, there is the ever-looming specter of death. It is only visible through abstraction for the most part, though we are generally educated on the basic physiological processes that accompany it. Consciousness is the great unknown here, alongside life itself, because we do not know just how deep the information goes that we are able to possess regarding it. To clarify, I mean that the nature of consciousness can only be theorized beyond the

biologically known, inclusive of neuroscience. Anything beyond this is speculation, and not entirely within the scope of this work.

The dreaming state, or unconscious mind, is also aware of our mortality, and strange condition we find ourselves in. This is expressed through abstractions, as well as longing for a rational to answer to our questions regarding consciousness, and *being* itself. It is as if we exist largely as a species in a purgatory of (at times) unpredictable suffering with intermittent moments of pleasure interspersed. Our unconsciousness allows for the various flights of fancy that attempt to answer the unknown through artistic, or spiritual pursuits. This is all well, and good, but we still have not arrived at a sufficient answer to the purpose of a life as short as ours is.

Perhaps universal consciousness dies after death, and what remains are remnants of biological processes in the form of post-mortem changes. Perhaps all these ideas are in vain. This is a possibility, but not a fact, of course. We have the choice to theorize about consciousness in a way that allows us to imagine possibilities, and probabilities with a clear head. We can, of course, look the other way until our own deaths whereby we shall face our predicament head on without prior interruption or intellectualizing ideals. This is a heady decision to make, however, because we as human beings are better prepared for life changes (even death) through proper reflection.

Psychologically, we need to face our future deaths in a more realistic way than we might be used to. Our comfort zone is no longer an accessible crutch whereby we can lean on when things get too serious. By accessing our ideas of death through personal, or professional therapeutic methods, an individual can eventually find some form of peace to be had. As mentioned before, theories are just that, theories, and nothing more. There are bases for these ideas in the rational, but make no mistake that there is a tremendous influence here from a psychological unconscious perspective. Nonetheless, these angles allow for a balanced approach toward the truth of the matter, regardless of how difficult it may end up being in the end.

How can we find some form of peace in the knowledge that we are essentially temporary agents without the fullness of the expression of the will? This is an important question because it asks much of the individual in a way that forces one to think about it twice. In my previous work, *Essay on the Limitations of Free Will*, I discussed the concept that we are not fully autonomous in that our desires cannot fully express the strength of the will. What I mean by this is that free will, in my estimation, is limited by circumstances largely beyond our control. This is a frightening concept, but I believe it is demonstrable through the innumerable examples of daily life for every one of us.

As I mentioned, the dreaming state is always acutely aware of our mortality because it is ingrained in us from a primitive throwback to earlier times in our development as individuals. We are conscious of our deaths, it is true, but we do not always think on it (for the most part). Unless we occupy ourselves with some form of scientific work dealing with the deceased, most of us are happy to avoid the concept of death as being personally impactful. I believe this to be a form of self-preservation that blindsides us to the unfortunate truth of the matter.

Nonetheless, it is important for us to reflect on our deaths in a realistic way. We should allow our youth to view medical imagery, and obtain information regarding bodily processes leading up to death as being perceived as natural, and not something to be ashamed of. The issue of death is not only individualistic, but a sociological phenomenon as well that needs to be investigated further.

We rely on society, social media, and other forms of sources of information to guide us on how we should approach life. This is not to say that there are not other factors such as ingrained cultural ideals, identities, or traditions aside from the wider spectrum of a globalized society. These factors are very much real, and are part of a wider, more nuanced form of psychological phenomenon that must be sensitively discussed. As we delve deeper into the concepts we are discussing here, I shall attempt to make some sense out of death from a rational, yet open minded point of view.

Grief teaches us in that it is an experience that is highly individualized to the person in question. Whether it be through a loss of a loved one, or a well-cared for pet, each one of us responds differently to these situations as they happen. We cannot predict our own reactions in times of grief, but we can premeditate ideas regarding how we might possibly act. Our personality which was informed through social cues from birth, as well as our interactions with the outside world, has a lot to do with how we might respond to a profound loss. Though we do not know how we might respond in a situation that confronts us such as death, we do have a foundation to work with if we examine our everyday reactions to situations we experience.

Experience allows the production of appropriate actions to a given situation for survivalists. All human beings are at heart survivalists. This is inclusive of the experience of a loss through death. It is arguable that there is something within each one of us that is a powerful dormant force for emotional balance. Scientists practice their profession with a balanced, rational view of life. Non-scientists have the option, and opportunity, to work this technique of being into their own lives as a benefit. This is not to say that emotions should be ignored, or placed in a position where they are not given due consideration.

I have encountered many people who have lost a loved one, and each one of them have had a unique story to tell of their loss. Sometimes this loss involved grief surrounding whether the person was there for the event (or not), as well as themes surrounding personal regret. There are some commonalities of each one of these experiences which I have observed, and they consist of a genuine longing for what is no longer there. Permanence is a concept that is longed for, though it is far out of reach especially for those who experience a loss. This creates another rift in the inner spirit of mankind, for it teaches us that there is an incredible tragedy more profound than we might be able to perceive. This tragedy is ineffable, for it surrounds the whole of humanity like a dark cloud full of thunder, and rain.

Our sentience, as advanced as it is, maintains a sort of fulcrum between the madness of existence, and the hope of possibilities. We are incredibly reliant on societal boundaries, ideals, and communally placed acceptable behavior patterns. We must follow these boundaries because without them we would go indescribably mad. There must be a semblance of order even within the chaos of experience. This semblance is irrational, and is only visible to the individual who is blindsided by their own ambition against the hourglass of time.

Individuals who are focused on death awareness will be able to either continue through the power of the (limited) will, or self-annihilate through various means. There is no in-between here. The drive toward death is powerful in every individual, and is constantly present alongside the drive toward survival. When we open ourselves to the possibilities that we cannot control our future, there is an option toward stoicism which allows for a balanced view of situations. Still, even with a stoic mindset, there is the lurking death drive to consider. It is not always as powerful as the drive to survive, but it is constantly there; pervasive, and silently oppressive in the background of our lives.

The madness of existence is found in the experiences of everyday people, in everyday situations, in every walk of life. It is through the power of the knowledge of death that we are held captive through works of art, cultural artefacts, and even linguistic historicity. Our drive toward the future is a ponderous one, for in one hand we have advances that survive generation to generation, but on the other hand we have inevitable personal death experiences to look forward to.

Why do we look for legacies in this world when all things will return to dust? Perhaps it is the act of creating a legacy that captivates the individual in a way that allows for a form of coping with the truth of death. Perhaps it is found in the sharing of personal wisdom through the lives of others. Are these things enough to persuade us that life is not in vain? It is, for me, a hard sell to consider that life is anything other than a series of chances, situations, circumstances, and possibilities that limit the will.

We have a choice as to how we choose to see the world. We can focus on the knowledge gained through the sciences, as well as those informed individuals who have come before us as ancestors. The other option is to view the world from a non-materialistic, or spiritual aspect. Even still, there is a possibility of viewing the world from both points of view. Whether this is a necessary thing for humans to do is up for conjecture, but it happens, nonetheless. It could be a throwback to a more primitive time where what we see before us is reimagined by the subconscious as being something other than what it may already be.

The great Dr. Carl Jung, in his work *Modern Man in Search of a Soul*, addresses this directly: "While we are on this question of psychic constitution, I must not fail to point out that there are some people whose attitude is essentially spiritual and others whose attitude is essentially materialistic. It must not be assumed that such an attitude is accidentally acquired or springs from some misunderstanding." These aspects of whether one chooses to view something from a subjective point of view over a conventional materialistic one is something that is part of the survivalist nature of mankind.

There is a great thirst within the very heart of a human being that requires answers more profound than what is commonly known. We are curious about the properties of things beyond the scope of our understanding just as we are curious about scientific findings. This is something that is natural, particularly when we find ourselves in the position of having to cope with sentience without going completely insane. If we were to only see the objective without the assistance of the dreaming state of the subconscious, it is possible that we would not be experiencing the world in a way that is beneficial to us. What I mean by this is that beyond our five senses, we have an internal world that interprets the outside world in a nuanced way that cannot easily be identified. The objective can, and is identified, for it is readily observable by all of us in one way or another. Our agreed upon reality is shared by one, and all. What is not so shared is the internal world that we find ourselves in due to life.

The conflicts with which we are presented spring from a source that is highly individualized, and based on internal states of consciousness. To clarify, I mean that how we subjectively process the outside world is specific to each one of us. There are things that are quantifiable in terms of the scientific which are universally known laws, but these laws are processed by each one of us in a way that either stimulates our internal imagination, or brings us to more questions about the nature of reality. We all live in our own individual worlds tied together by the science of how we should see, and interact with the outside world.

We can navigate the world around us through mathematical exactness, and geometrical knowledge of physical objects just fine without the imagination, but it seems that we are compelled to introduce this to our understanding of the world. Something within the heart of mankind, the part that thirsts for the truth, is continuously in a battle with the outside world for deeper knowledge. The more we learn about general science, physics, philosophy, and biology, the more we are tempted to drive things further by our own curiosity. This is how we sometimes make new discoveries along the scientific path. Other times, we find ourselves in a situation of daydreaming, where our ideas lead us nowhere in particular.

This is the chaos that surrounds mankind as we know it; the inner weakness of individuals reflecting upon the whole of the world in a way that is like a giant scar. We are mortally wounded animals licking our own wounds in some futile way that will never benefit us beyond the advances in knowledge for future generations. We will never see those great advances, even though they are in their nascency right now as we speak. We will grow old, die, and no longer be a part of this world that we fought so hard to improve. Why do we do this? Is it the mythology of a legacy that is the reasoning behind this? Maybe it is the possibility of being outlived by death through some creative force of inner power through creativity? These questions do not have direct answers, because though they may resonate with some, others do not have the luxury of even asking them in the first place.

CHAPTER THREE

To be sentient requires an enforced responsibility to take control over those aspects of life which are in our power to influence.

Dr. Carl Jung was very observant when it came to the power that the human mind possesses. In *Modern Man in Search of a Soul*, he focuses directly on this power, and how individuals are often unfulfilled by the standard desires formed through sociological measures. "Expansion of life, usefulness, efficiency, the cutting of a figure in social life, the shrewd steering of offspring into suitable marriages and good positions – are not these purposes enough? Unfortunately, this is not enough meaning or purpose for many persons who see in the approach of old age a mere diminution of life, and who look upon their earlier ideals only as something faded and worn out."

Is there a way outside of this problem? Can we make it to the end of our own lives, and not see these ideals as being merely ephemeral? I believe it is possible, but perhaps it is necessary that this happen to us for there to be a true sense of closure in a life that has been lived. All our illusions are tempting to us in that it almost seems there are other, easier ways out of seeing the truth behind life. To view life as a series of accomplishments leading to some unknown fulfillment that is subjective in nature is problematic in a way, because it doesn't answer whether that subjectivity is applicable to the objective experiences of others. What I mean by this is that fulfillment, being as individual as it is, cannot be seen as universal in its expression, nor in its manifestation in one's own life. It must be seen as something that is wholly unique to the individual, but woefully inaccessible to those who are not in the same set of circumstances as the next person.

The search for meaning is so particular to the individual that it cannot be answered as a universality, or proven aspect of reality. It is a phenomenon that is directly related to the subjective side of the individual mind. This can be one way of demonstrating that the mind is certainly powerful in its anesthetizing of the more primitive fears found in mankind regarding death as a fact. To clarify, I mean that perhaps meaning itself is just a manifestation of ignorance to the fact that death will take away all our accomplishments one by one in an instant. This is not to say that there will be no evidence of our changes, influence, and creative output after our deaths, but for *us who die* it does signify the end of a legacy, at least for us.

Those who are left behind may be able to learn from, and appreciate what we have invented, thought, created, and influenced throughout our time while we were here. There is no doubt of this, and there are many examples of this being a fact. Nonetheless, it is compelling of an idea that for the one that created, invented, and thought of things, there is nothing but the absence of life to look forward to at the point of death. This is a bleak outlook, for certain, but it is only one among several that exist regarding the conceptualization of what a legacy truly means.

It is possible that our consciousness could somehow continue in a nebulous way where there is no sense of self present. Keep in mind that there is no direct evidence present for this other than conjecture, but it is certainly an interesting one to outline. If consciousness is somehow tangible, and mind is a part of this possibility, we may find ourselves in some form of meta-consciousness after death. We may no longer be aware of who we were, what our desires were, or anything concrete. It is also possible that our consciousness will become part of the pan-consciousness of all things (if that theory were true at least). As we can observe, there are many theories as to what happens to consciousness after death, if anything at all does. Why does this matter to the conceptualization of legacy? Because, well, it is important to realize that legacies can only be appreciated by the individual that created it if they are around to see it. If there is no consciousness after death, these creations, and ideals have been in vain.

Our states of consciousness, whether it be focused on the rational, or irrational, are warring against one another just as all things are in a constant state of conflict. There is a dichotomy between the conscious, and unconscious mind, just as there is one between the acausal, and causal. Everything appears to be made of opposites in some fashion, though the biological objective world appears to have only one dominating factor; that being life itself. Still, life itself has an opposite which is that of death, or dying.

We are always on a psychological tightrope, in that if we were aware of it acutely, we would go insane from the effects of the battles we are constantly fighting for survival in. Whether it be through internal immune system activity, or through more domestic macro-issues such as struggling to earn a paycheck to feed oneself, all these battles are fought on a constant basis.

Life appears to wage war against itself when it comes to the survival of the human animal. There are so many dimensions to consider when it comes to conflicts that exist within mankind that it would require a separate dissertation to fulfill a tenth of the need adequately. Whether it be through religious, philosophical, scientific, or political conflicts, there are always bound to be invisible guillotines ready to be deployed upon the unsuspecting at any time. To clarify, I mean that the multitude of our conflicting ideas only serve to cause incredible anguish, and misery for the human race at large.

Despite all this misery, there are in contrast a great deal of incredible advancements made throughout history. Great works of art have been painted, sculpted, and written, and even greater works of science have been solidified, and tested throughout the ages. When we think on our own deaths, perhaps it is with the legacies of the distant past that fascinates us to such a degree that we might believe we possess a part of them even after our own deaths. In this way, the advancements of humanity become shared accomplishments, where the individual is considered secondary to overall creative works.

Dr. Carl Jung further elaborates on the condition of man by stating that the organization of the individual by means of goals, creativity, and other life-affirming activities is more beneficial than a life lived without purpose. Dr. Jung says plainly that "a directed life is in general better, richer, and healthier than an aimless one, and that it is better to go forwards with the stream of time than backwards against it." Perhaps this is the key to a largely hidden aspect found within the individual meant to be utilized as a form of survival tool in the face of annihilation. Setting goals, living healthily through better nutrition, and generally taking strides towards the beneficial is seen as being generally better than the alternative which is perdition.

Perhaps this is the case in that individuals are meant to cultivate a purpose to avoid misery within this life. This does not answer the questions regarding whether these cultivations are self-serving alone, and without merit outside mental tranquility. As I have mentioned before, it is quite possible that we create these distractions for ourselves to cope with a rudderless void ahead of us. There is a continual manifestation of the void through all attempts great, and small, to avoid the truth regarding our own deaths.

How should we live, then? Should we, as Dr. Jung suggests, direct ourselves in a fashion that merely mimics the roles which we would play in order to inoculate our minds against the numbness found in the potential meaninglessness of the cold universe before us? Or are these methods genuinely beneficial, and purposeful, in that they are not merely tools to numb ourselves against the possibilities of the experience of dying, but to prepare us for it through the art of self-care? There are no easy answers here, but it is likely that there is a lot of grey area here that is not being accounted for.

It is possible that we are without innate purpose, and that meaning must be created to find fulfillment in this world. It then follows that focusing on the future allows us to process slowly those aspects of death which we may have not considered before. What I mean by this is that life

stages appear to prepare us for our deaths in a way that if successfully approached can lead us to a healthier experience when death comes for us.

The awareness we cultivate toward the realization of our mortality can either provide a positive catalyst for internalized creations of meaning, or it can bring with it despair. Perhaps we are meant to experience both aspects of these manifestations in our lives in some nebulous form. To clarify, it is as if our experiences of the extreme (both despair as well as well-being) create within us a fortitude that prepares us adequately for death in a highly individualistic manner.

As we adjust from one age of life to the next, we bring with it an experience that is both traumatic, as well as life affirming. In our journey toward the end of life, which is ongoing as long as we exist, we are compelled towards extremes of experience in both a beneficial, as well as harmful way. When we self-destruct through recklessness, self-harm, or general negligence, we are not thinking about those aspects of life which are positive, and affirming. When we experience genuine pleasures, we are enraptured in the moment in a way that can only be expressed as ecstatic. This experience is fleeting, whereas a self-destructive one is drawn out, and often torturous. Nonetheless, both experiences are continuously present in one form or another throughout our lives.

Another great tragedy of sentience is in the fact that we all experience pain, as well as pleasure. We do not experience these things in equal measure, and the presence of any pain or suffering is enough to negate the so-called benefits of the pleasures life has to offer. If we are honest with ourselves, we can see that there is an incredible asymmetry of pleasurable existence which turns out to benefit some, while bypassing others altogether. Often the pleasures we experience are the result of temporarily hard-fought manifestations of desire brought forth by the will. Even when we experience pleasure, it is often the result of some concerted effort on behalf of the individual which could be at times painful to experience. Pain, therefore, is seen as positive and pleasure as a negation of the positive experience of suffering. When we suffer, we are experiencing the true

nature of life, and when we are amid the pleasurable, we are given a brief repose from the harsh reality that surrounds us.

When we look at our diminution of life, as Dr. Jung would call it, we are face to face with an incredible change of perspective that rapidly takes hold of us. Every moment that we have lived is seen in a different light, and we cannot share this experience with anyone else adequately. What I mean by this is that when (and if) our life flashes before our eyes, it is a highly individualistic experience that is subjective in nature. There is nothing else in the world to compare to it, because it is an internal exploration of those things which came before us in our own lives based on a flawed set of memories.

Towards the end of life, there is a sort of active (and inactive) reflection on those things which have come before. The past has different significance, and the present becomes ever fleeting in an uncontrollable way. It would seem as if the very walls were closing in on us in those moments of aged contemplation, but we are always given succor in those few moments of pleasure in between the sufferings of the mind. I believe that each stage of life brings forth similar moments of reflection, but none so profound as those which come with advanced age.

Each stage of life is necessary to prepare us for dealing with this profundity, even if it ends up being an expression of crude primitiveness on our part when it comes. We may lash out at others, ourselves, or become cynical in such a way that we clearly appear to be compensating for the inevitability of death. On the other hand, we may appear tranquil, at ease, and stoic in our approach toward the final stages of life. What determines the expression here is unknown, but it could be related to those benefits of affirming one's own life early on throughout the lifespan. Perhaps it is in the acting out of positive affirming behaviors that we are given the tools necessary to tranquilly face our own deaths when it comes for us. If this is the only reason for life affirming activities, other than the temporary benefits of health, then there is a profound emptiness to this life that is unspoken but demonstrated through the necessity of these actions.

Reflection allows us to see those older ideals that we held prior to our awareness of death as something real. As we mature through puberty, adulthood, and then old age, we manage a sequence of ideals that are filtered through the understanding we cultivate through our minds. Our perceptions become clearer, at least to us, in the subjectivity of our minds as we grow throughout our lifespans. Reflection here, then, becomes a throwback to the primitive experiences of early infancy. We come into this world with a strength of subjectivity that returns to us in old age. It is through growth, age, and experience that we can see both the objective, as well as subjective in our lives. The constancy of both these aspects become manifest in the very core of our being because of the learning patterns we are subjected to by our own brains.

Psychologically, there is a return to infancy in some respects when we enter old age. By this I do not mean that there is a lack of intelligence, maturity, knowledge, and skill gained from years of life, but a subtle agency that acts within us; gnawing at us from the subconscious until we are so infirm that we cannot act contrary to its demands. The mind being in a state of slow decline demonstrates a sort of internal return to the subjective in a way that allows for a softening of the blow of death when it does come for us. We may be cognizant of our surroundings, and maintain our level of intelligence throughout the entire process of dying, but there is a turning inward which cannot be explained sufficiently with words.

As I previously mentioned, each stage of life is necessary for us to manage coping with the next through the structuralizing of our inner worlds, as well as our knowledge and interactions with the objective outside world. Without sufficient access to those resources that allow for growth in each of these stages, it is possible that only despair awaits us at the hour of our deaths. All this is tied in with the concept of creating a legacy; of birthing a series of ideas that were once relegated to our own minds into the outside world. Never mind that this is largely a futile effort on our behalf, for even through our legacies our memory becomes eventually lost in time after perhaps a hundred years or so (for most of us).

CHAPTER FOUR

How the awareness of death informs our understanding.

"One night in long bygone times, man awoke and saw himself. He saw that he was naked under cosmos, homeless in his own body. All things dissolved before his testing thought, wonder above wonder, horror above horror unfolded in his mind." – Peter Wessel Zapffe, *The Last Messiah*.

It is through the awareness of death that we see how miniscule we truly are in light of cosmic concerns. The great Norwegian author, and philosopher Peter Wessel Zapffe was tragically aware of the human condition when he described the nakedness of man in *The Last Messiah*. It is without question that the more an individual becomes aware of his or her condition as a human being that there is an increase in sorrow, both consciously, and subconsciously.

In the subconscious mind we absorb all those things we receive as knowledge through the objective world. It is through the subjective that we transform our knowledge into something fantastical. The strange, macabre fascination that we in our history have expressed through the arts has come to us through the unconscious mind influenced by the objective world. To clarify, I mean that all those facts which we learn about death become symbolic to us on a subconscious level, and manifest in the arts through creative endeavors.

For some, there is no clear outlet for their knowledge of death other than feigning ignorance of the matter, or delaying thinking on it for another time. Death, then becomes relegated to the subjectivity of the unconscious where there are few rules in terms of expression.

When we envision our own death through our own imagination, we come to sympathize with those who have passed on before us. What I mean by this is that we can imagine how whole lives have been lived before us, with all the experiences of pain, sorrow, and joys that have led up to our very existence. We must be willing to question our acceptance of generational pain through the act of procreation at the very least to have a truly sympathetic outlook regarding the asymmetry of life itself.

David Benatar, in his book *Better Never to Have Been: The Harm of Coming Into Existence,* makes a sufficient argument for this asymmetry at length. In my work, however, I will merely touch upon it in such a way as to at the very least call into question the nature of how things work in our society on a fundamental level. When there are no solid foundations to stand upon, it is impossible for people to make conclusions about life regardless of other factors such as religious belief, idealism, and individualistic philosophies. One thing is certain; the generation of life causes suffering, and pain. There is also joy to be had, that is certain, but it is in no way outweighed by the suffering of individuals, and the possibilities of suffering (not to mention death).

We can practice looking back at life at any stage of our existence, and peer deeply into those aspects of who we are to make peace with our eventual passing from this earth. This is not something that is easy to do, but perhaps it is necessary for there to be some form of closure in the short story of a human life. At the very least, these ideas should provoke some form of response that is based on inquiry, rationality, and logic. I understand that these ideas are not very popular, but that does not make them any less true (at least in theory).

Theories, and facts, are all we must go on with in this world where objectivity is king, and the subjective is pushed back into a corner in some dark place of the self. In the great suffering of mankind, where there are howls of mourning to be heard if we only listen closely, there are inklings of the truth about death that can no longer be ignored. We must be honest with ourselves regarding death at some point in life.

As the union between life, and death dissolve, so do those aspects of the mind which relate to unity of the self. What I mean by this is that through aging we become overshadowed by the prospect that *what* we are is temporary. The self becomes less, and less of an importance in those few days we spend in contemplation at the hours of our deaths. Perhaps legacy provides some form of comfort at a time when the individual is dying, but it is hard to say unless we are experiencing this as well. It is a subjective experience that follows the dying process as the body fulfills each role necessary in the shutting down of organs.

Death is not merely an experience that is of an objective nature. It is manifested as a subjective inner process that allows for the absorption of ideas in such a way that the individual becomes less, and less in tune with their own cognition. The systems slow down, and function less perfectly as they had before. The mind is in a place where only the individual can know the extent of their own experience of the dying process. This is the great mystery of the final of life's stages; that the individual who is dying can only experience their mental resources from a subjective point of view.

It is in the dying process that the subjective, and objective come together in one unity. The objective is of course the biological aspect of death, and decay. The other is of a highly personal nature that cannot fully be described with words alone. Both aspects are necessary for us to cross through the final stages of life in a balanced way. Why these processes work together is unclear, other than perhaps the mind finds itself at the mercy of declining cognitive processes that have a biological explanation.

Perhaps there is more to this picture, though there is only speculation that can be determined of it thus far. Cognition, consciousness, and the mind in general can be known through biological processes, but there is something missing to the picture. What that something is cannot be known, and is perhaps a property of the acausal. To clarify, it is a property that belongs to the other side of consciousness, which may or may not even exist.

The self, being a construct, is continuously in danger of being threatened by existential questions. Where do we ultimately come from on a grand scale? Is there anything beyond what currently exists that we can find a similarity to regarding the human mind? Are human beings the only sentient beings tormented by the possibilities of death? These are all questions which have no clear answer, aside from basic physics, biology, and chemistry. These questions can also be answered subjectively for the time being, at least.

Other animals feel pain, and suffering when confronted with physical dangers. Are there any that feel the sting of death quite like human beings? We have mulled over these ideas continuously throughout time immemorial, never quite obtaining the answers to those questions we so desperately seek. As human beings, we have the capacity toward empathy, and thus can see other creatures in a similar light at times. It seems as if all of creation is wailing in unison, living a life of toil, and uncertainty until the final moment of existence.

In our waking hours we are reduced to the fundamental questions which beg for answers that we do not have. How are we to live? Is there a true morality that exists that allows for objectivity in our largely subjective worldviews? Again, these are questions that can only be theorized upon, because as a species we are completely rudderless other than our accomplishments in the sciences.

Our foundations are based on logic, reason, and mutually shared experiences, but we also have an internal world that is necessary to nourish in order to lessen the blow of eventual death. The only way that we have access to doing so is through an embracing of the objective, as well as nourishing of the subconscious. There must be a balance struck between the two, because if there is none to be had then the consequences are either madness, or destructiveness. Psychologically, we are complex creatures, and require intuitive answers to grandiose questions, as well as those of an established nature. These two aspects of the self are what helps create a barrier in the mind against self-annihilation, which is eminent.

By seeing ourselves being in a position of potential non-being through death, we become horrified by our station in life. This horrific condition is not always noticeable by the average person, because it is safely stored away in the subconscious for later retrieval. Imagine if we were to continuously be aware of our own deaths in a communicative way with others. This would be somewhat of a disaster because it would imply that we are aware of our potential for nothingness. When we see this potential, we are thus capable of renouncing every belief system we have been proselytized to believe in. This is a powerful statement, because when a human being comes face to face with the abyss, there is an inward-facing psychological component which recognizes the death impulse.

The death impulse, as I have explained in numerous works of mine, is satisfied with nothing but self-annihilation. It is a force that moves within the whole of humanity at the same rate as the will to survive. Both forces contend for dominance in our everyday lives, but only the survival instinct is paid attention to on a wider scale. The death impulse is always there, bidding its time as a facet of the broken nature of the human mind. We are shattered by our own impulses, desires, beliefs, and social constructs that we abide by. The death impulse does not distinguish any of these things, and becomes manifest in several aspects of those things we bide our time with.

Returning to the concept of legacies, these concepts seem to only exist to allay the fears we have of complete nothingness. When we think deeply upon this, we can easily conclude that even the greatest empires of the world will one day be completely forgotten by the sands of time. If these things are possible, it is even more so a reality for those of us who have not the station in life, nor the capability to create great works of societal value. We can attempt to create legacies through those who come after us, such as children, but we are merely creating ties that bind that will eventually burn away completely in the grand scheme of things. This is not to say that children do not hold value, for they most certainly do, it is just that legacies cannot be people. People have their own agencies. We cannot

see other human beings as objects to be used for their value to us. This would run counter to the intuition that maximizing the will through personal freedom is the utmost important value to hold as a human being.

No matter the individual, we all must experience death, and this puts us at a grave disadvantage when it comes to living our lives as 'normal'. We can create diversions for ourselves, allow ourselves to be consumed in work, or a creative pursuit (perhaps domestic also) but none of these things represent ultimate reality. The ultimate reality is that we will all die, and we must face this fact with every waking moment of our lives. In our daily lives, we are so conditioned to avoid death that it hardly gets a mention wherever you go. It's not something that is readily advertised, because it wouldn't be popular even if it was. Death is no joke (or perhaps it is the ultimate joke).

We invent elaborate rituals to cope with life events inclusive of death, and we participate in them because some portion of us believes that this is the ultimate reality. What I mean by this is that our beliefs, ideals, thoughts, and actions can (and often do) place a mark upon us that changes us fundamentally. This change often puts us in a position where we ignore the stark reality of death to psychologically appease some primitive part of our nature toward survival. Our minds are remarkable because we can completely absorb ourselves in one train of thought long enough to distract us from what is going to eventually happen to us.

Regardless of how we invent things to quell our fears of death, we still must realize that even the most mundane activities have a foretaste of the dying process about them. To clarify, I mean that even waking up in the morning, and beginning a ritualistic process of brushing one's teeth, eating breakfast, and reading (or watching) the news is a foreshadowing. This foreshadowing is of the experience of lying down, losing energy to move, and eventually going through the experience of death. Even our more supposed life-affirming activities such as exercise, healthful eating, and positive relationships with others is tied down by the weight of the eventual truths regarding our own deaths.

Resignation to the facts of life allow us to see just how bleak each living moment truly is. We are in a circle of existence that can break at any time, and for the most part we live as if this were not the case. What are we to do then with our time? As I have mentioned before, aesthetics can be a saving grace for us, because it is tied in with the subjective, and artistic. These things provide the ability for us to not specifically ignore our deaths, but to transform our experience of life into a preparation for it. What I mean by this is that the arts, creative experience, and aesthetics all hold possibilities of internal importance to the foundations of the individual.

Individuals who take advantage of the gift of the arts can transform themselves in such a way that human experience becomes meaningful. This is an implication that life can have meaning assigned to it. It just has to be discovered. Returning to the concept of resignation, when we realize that our time is short there is a potential for liberation that the individual can take advantage of. The creative works of innumerable individuals throughout history are testimony to the attempt by human beings to find meaning amid the chaos that is life.

I propose that all creations, whether through scientific, or artistic means, have manifested over time due to human curiosity, as well as the search for purpose. The discovery of a vital medicine, or the creation of a sculpture both serve similar objectives outside of their initial ones; that is, they allow for the individual to express a purpose. When we think on it, it becomes clear that human beings have the dual capability for sentience, as well as a creative aspect. Our cognitive expression is varied in comparison to other beings in the animal kingdom, and we are unique in that we attempt to find purpose in all things we discover.

In the final judgment of things, we are masters of nothing but our own creative, subjective internal world. We have only limited control over our ability to maintain our health, our well-being, as well as our station in life. In contrast to this, the creative self is without such limitations because it is based in idealism, thought, and other aspects of the self that are not fully expressed by the will (which is limited).

CHAPTER FIVE

Dealing with existential grief can be complicated, especially when there is a history of loss in the life of an individual.

Dr. Carl Jung, in *Modern Man in Search of a Soul* states in his work unequivocally that "It is the growth of consciousness which we must thank for the existence of problems; they are the dubious gift of civilization." It is curious that he chooses to use the word gift when relating to those things that civilization has provided for us. The more that we think, the more that we encounter issues that often have no readily available answers. We can look for conventional guidance throughout life by dictating our choices through the lens of society at large, but what use would that be?

It can be argued that a more authentic life, though not necessarily happy in nature, is a more worthwhile life. If we have no foundation to ground ourselves on when it comes to moral questions, we cannot live at all. Here are a few things that can be seen as being at least partially-objective; desire for knowledge, a healthy perspective on loss, and authenticity through denial of the conventional. When we desire knowledge, and make good on that desire through study, and inquiry, we become more enriched on a mental level. This allows us to build up the fortitude necessary to be strong when we are confronted with incredibly difficult situations inclusive of loss.

Having a healthy perspective on loss keeps us honest with ourselves, because it allows us to see from an empathetic point of view the eventual experiences we will go through in the dying process. Studying the world around us through scientific inquiry, research, and the continual desire to

learn allows us to build a foundation of strength that will help soothe us during those moments preceding death. As Dr. Jung would point out further in his work, he says that "It is just man's turning away from instinct-his opposing himself to instinct-that creates consciousness." Focusing on direct conceptualizations that are based on the partially to wholly objective allows for a healing of the individual on a level that is continuously in progression.

In the end of it all, we have our experiences, regardless of the conflict, and tragedy throughout the world always present with us. Dr. Jung makes a good argument when he focuses on the simplicity of the concept that man is separated from the primitive instinct, and thus entrenched in consciousness on a perpetually changing landscape. The supposed foundations that we are grounding ourselves upon are fit to be questioned, especially if they are based on groundless beliefs that do not satisfy the individual need for personal meaning. What I mean by this is that we must decide to utilize objective tools to understand the gravity of our situation as human beings.

Desiring knowledge, and fostering the perception of the world within the realm of science, and reason, allow for a furtherance of the individual's persona which becomes enriched throughout maturity. This can influence our expression of grief in times of tremendous loss. Each experience that we find ourselves in is influenced by the last in such a profound way that we do not actively realize it on an everyday level. This can most especially be applied to those who are going through the grieving process most actively.

Realizing that, from a logical perspective, it is important to acknowledge the normalcy of death within the world, the individual has a duty toward his or herself to see their own inevitable future death as being completely reasonable, and necessary. By doing this we are utilizing the ability to rationalize with ourselves, and solidify a part of our conscious mind regarding death as a profound experience.

The loss of a loved one can lead to a form of existential despair, as there comes the physical realization that there exists a dreadful impermanence of life. I have pointed this concept out several times before in previous works, but I would like to expand upon it here. When we are in the midst of the death of a loved one, there are a myriad of ways that we might choose to react. Our reactions are based on a mixture of our foundations as individuals, as well as on extenuating circumstances surrounding our personal lives at that moment in time. Some mourn loudly, unable to respond positively toward efforts at consolation. Others quietly experience the loss with an inward-facing opposition to the outside world.

When we confront our grief by viewing the deceased at a funeral, we are face to face with something that can either bring closure, or cause further distress. There is a grey area around this as well. There can be a form of closure experienced, but then an anguish of a subjective nature that can take over the individual. It is the latter problem that I wish to focus on here. Anguish can be caused by the realization of impermanence, the closeness of the deceased to the individual, as well as a reflection on one's own mortality at that moment. When we are in the throes of anguish, we can hardly place words to match the emotional outpouring of experience that we go through. To clarify, I mean that some experiences are so subjective in nature that it is impossible to translate that into a communicable experience with preciseness.

The subjective nature of our subconscious minds takes over at these times of unimaginable emotional pain. This is evidenced through how everyone reacts to death differently through the whole grieving process. In our search for consolation, we often come up short because we have nothing to compare death with. It is the ultimate phenomenon, other than the generation of life itself. Should we look at death from a biological standpoint alone, we will miss the purpose of our inquiry here. Yes, it is necessary to view biological processes to understand death, but the subjective mind must also be satisfied in some minor way at least.

Primitive rituals, such as those that were developed through religious rites of all cultures, penetrate to the heart of the impermanence of mankind. In many religions there is an attempt to commune with others through fellowship, and ceremonial rites that mark the various aspects of life passages inclusive of death. Each stage represents a sacrament of some sort, thus furthering the individual into the mysteries of whatever belief system they happen to fall into. This sort of experience can be useful to some, but it does not assist everyone in making the transition from life to death in an easy (or even reasonable) way. Grief has a way of showing up in the primitive subjective mind that is separated from those outward facing rites that serve as a 'cover all' for each stage of loss. What I mean by this is that the most primitive expression of emotion is arguably grief because it is so raw in its experience.

No belief system can replace the subjective hidden within our minds somewhere profound. There is something ruinous hidden inside of us that comes out in the darkest of times. What that something is cannot be fully known, but perhaps it is a throwback to more primitive mental states inherited from our ancestors. It is related to a primal fear mixed with dread that cannot be fully named, because it is so specific to everyone on an individual level. We can see through the artefacts of religious belief a sociocultural aspect of handling the various stages of life in a way that is uniform to the culture at hand. There is always a longing toward the divine in some form, whether this is taken internally or viewed with a faith to sustain the individual. Whether this is beneficial is yet to be seen, but it must be known that beliefs are largely products of sociocultural expectations depending on the expression of faith that the individual chooses to adhere to.

In the final assessment of things, it must be pointed out that for there to be a more fruitful handling of one's emotions, there should be a foundation built upon the desire for knowledge through objective learning. This does not negate the importance of the subconscious, or the subjective,

at all. What this does is create a foundation that lasts far beyond the experiences of grief in our lives.

There is a space that exists in-between consciousness, and the primitive expression of mankind. This space, as I have outlined in prior works, is called the liminal. This is where there is a blank slate by which we can build new foundations upon in our lives. How is this done? Well, firstly it must be through the willingness of the individual to completely deregulate themselves away from the influence of cultural norms. This does not mean that one should go streaking in the street naked, or do acts contrary to conventional morality. What this means is that the individual is empowered with the ability to see their subconscious, and conscious minds for what they are; a collection of neurological processes that work in tandem to build up the conceptualizations we have of the self, and of individual agency.

The liminal acts in a way that some cultures would describe as the void, or the abyss. This is not a mystical call to any sort of belief in an irrational hypothesis, but a pointing out of this space of no-space that in theory exists outside of time. Every moment where we meditate on nothingness, or decide to dissociate in some way that connects us to a state of non-experience is beneficial because it grounds us to base reality (or the objective). We always come back, though we are changed every time we think on the liminal, because it is a concept that is beyond the subjective, or objective, yet grounded in both peripherally.

Certainly, this is a difficult idea to conceptualize on a fundamental level because it is abstract. How can the liminal, therefore, help an individual pass through those stages of grief when it is wholly abstract? Firstly, this is possible through rational thinking, and viewing the subconscious separately from the conscious mind in a way that the subjective is viewed separately from the objective. Each of these aspects have their important places in the healing process, but without each of them individually we would not be able to progress beyond our profound grief.

When we work out those issues which exist in those in-between spaces, we can declutter ourselves and advance toward either self-creation, or annihilation. This is a choice that is the ultimate force of the will in action through desire. In self-creation, we are building actively new foundations, new connections, and new possibilities through the choice of moving forward beyond our most difficult of circumstances. In contrast, annihilation, or in this case self-annihilation, is the ultimate act of defiance against a world where suffering is certainly overpowering at times. This is not to advocate for self-annihilation, but an observation that is based on its opposing factor which is life-affirming.

Going back to the conceptualization of working out our issues, we must be willing to do this in a space that is free of outside influences. The individual must be open to dissecting their entirety of being through self-assessment, and logical thinking. There can be no focus on belief, faith, truth, or morality when dealing with these aspects of the shattered self. What must be seen here is pure emptiness before the void of non-being because that is where new foundations can be created.

This all sounds mystical, or quasi-religious, but I assure you that it is not. This is a simple reflection on how we can see the void through the death of others, and learn from our grieving experiences prior to our own demise. The language I have chosen to use has an air of mysticism about it simply because these experiences are subjective for everyone, and cannot adequately be described in words alone.

Returning to the concept of self-annihilation, if the individual is considering this path, they are actively choosing to fulfill the impulse toward death which acts in tandem with the life-affirming principles of self-preservation. The way that this happens has been described earlier, but I will elaborate on this further. Just as many religions practice the active belief in salvation, the individual is seeking salvation through self-annihilation. This makes suicide a sacred act that cannot be disregarded by society as it is. Again, to clarify, I do not advise anyone to take this path,

but I affirm the right of everyone to do so within the parameters of the will.

The choice of annihilation is one in which the individual disregards the self as being merely a construct. The self is challenged in such a way through difficult life situations, subjective access to suffering through mental processes, as well as physical pain. All these aspects of experience combine to weigh heavily upon the individual that is in the throes of despair. Suicide is never a topic to be taken lightly, especially when dealing with a phenomenon so profound. Some suicides may be for idealistic visions of life, others because of profound despair. Still others may be because of some obscure reason yet unknown to anyone but the individual (unless of course, they write a letter preceding death). Nonetheless, it is a powerful manifestation of the denial of the will through the inversion of desire.

Suicide is best seen as a phenomenon that is not isolated, but a symptom of a greater problem within society, and the individual. There are some of us who cannot fathom continuing in this world when there is a difficulty functioning on a basic level due to mental, or physical anguish. We can see that there is a point of no return where the individual can no longer accept the level of perceived suffering, and thus the prospect of death becomes more welcoming.

In the depths of profound loss lay the foundations for where an individual may fall into a deep depression due to the separation of relations close, and near. This depression is not typical in any way, because it involves an experience wholly tied in with the experience of loss. This is not a phenomenon that is necessarily clinical, but could be a brief lapse in ability to function due to said loss. When we become isolated, and unable to confide in others for recognition of our emotional well-being, there are irrational options open to the individual who is no longer stable. This lack of balance is intense in that it is experienced as the individual goes through the various stages of grief leading up to either healing or self-destruction. Whichever path the individual chooses, there is a profound change.

CHAPTER SIX

We are at a crossroads whereby traditional theological posturing does not satisfy our innate need to create meaning.

"Achievement, usefulness and so forth are the ideals which appear to guide us out of the confusion of crowding problems. They may be our lodestars in the adventure of extending and solidifying our psychic existences-they may help us in striking our roots in the world, but they cannot guide us in the development of that wider consciousness to which we give the name of culture." – Dr. Carl Jung, *Modern Man in Search of a Soul.*

Culture is an enigma because it is based on the collective visions of objectivism through the rational, and irrational manifestations of desire through action. When achievement does not lead to satisfaction, culture is there to cradle the individual in a way that is akin to falling asleep. What I mean by this is that culture uses the resources of individuals to provide conventional answers to questions that are enigmas. Culture leads to theological posturing, and that is a dangerous combination. As Dr. Jung points out, achievements can only do so much for the individual in question. Culture is a strange phenomenon, but a necessity due to the difficulty in finding meaning through individual achievement. It is a crutch upon which all of us at some point utilize for our mental well-being.

Well-being is of course subjective, but there are objective aspects to this state as well. When we do not have to question our state of existence by relying on culture, we go through rites of passage that correspond to those unanswered questions regarding purpose. Religion plays a similar role, and is a microcosm of culture with its own rites, and sacraments.

Culture guides us to create collectivist expressions of individualistic, and subjective ideals such as religion, political groups, and moralistic phenomena through mores or customs. It is foundational in a way as it replaces the individual's instinctual expression of purpose for a packaged, and consumable one. Culture is dangerous on the other hand because it eliminates the very healthy expressions of the subjective for a collectivist, or individualistic (yet conformist) view on life. It is a double-edged sword in a way because it both confirms, and denies the will of the individual. There is no doubt that culture is useful, but it is certainly not the source of the truth beyond objective phenomenon that are scientific in nature.

It would seem then that culture is not a net benefit for the individual, particularly if said individual is going through a crisis of some sort. The crisis I am referring to most importantly is that of the loss of a loved one through death. Culture does not prepare us properly for death, but it does inform us on how we should behave through carefully etched out folkways, customs, and mores. These aspects of culture are moldable, but rarely change in significant ways until after a long period of time through social advancements, and regressions.

Nonetheless, culture, though it is a bane to the individual, provides a form of salvation for humanity in that it eliminates the need for existential introspection. There is a form, style, ideal, and morality behind everything that exists in a cultural setting. These aspects may vary from culture to culture, but are increasingly becoming homogenous in modern times due to globalization, and technology. Our instantaneous access to information provides us with cementing cultural cues that burrow their way into our minds, lulling us into a sleep deeper than we can imagine death providing.

There is a sterility that exists in the sublimation of the self into cultural artifices, and this is shown directly through the uniformity which culture provides for human beings. Dissent is rarely tolerated, particularly if it has to do with questions of a moral nature. For example, suicide is still viewed as a taboo rather than a fundamental right of the individual by nature.

Our attachment to the cultural milieu allows for us to become penetrated mentally by religious, and historically accepted mythologies. Even if it is through a peripheral lens, there is still some form of change that happens to the individual that is indoctrinated into the very core of the brain through repetition of action. As human beings we are creatures of habit, and this is something that is phenomenally coherent with the aspects of culture that burrow themselves thoroughly into our subconscious minds. The individual is no longer a concern here, as there is a thorough sublimation that occurs from birth throughout the various stages of life.

Sublimation becomes a form of ecstasy within the individual, as their own ability to reason becomes obscured by rites of passage. The meaning of these rites has been shrouded by time, but are very much alive in a wide variety of belief systems throughout the world. Each one of us has a choice to continue in those systems built for us, or to turn away from it in search of personal meaning. Given the chaotic nature of reality, it is acceptable for either option to be utilized by the individual as both are survivalist tactics in the struggle to live.

When presented with serious situations, the individual that decides to create their own meaning is perhaps at an advantage. What I mean by this is that if the nature of our own deaths has been studied at length from a non-traditionalist point of view (subjective) we are better equipped to handle the death of a loved one based on the search for personal meaning.

Religious belief is often rigorous in its interpretation of emotion, thought, ideal, and expression of being. Certainly, one can in a religious state of belief contemplate one's own death. This is a fact. Yet for those who create their own meaning it is a more nuanced preparation for death that we are dealing with here. This nuance is expressed through the pain of realizing that much of reality is unknown to us, and death represents a profound sense of the unknown. When less trust is placed in faith, there is a foundational loss that is deeply felt by the individual, but is necessary for personal growth.

In our post-modern society, we are forced to look toward distinguishing the differences between the subjective, and objectively real. We know that there is objective reality because of how our senses align with others outside of ourselves. Physics, mathematics, and general scientific principles are sound examples of how reality matrices itself for the human race. Yet, the subjective consciousness represented through the internalized desires, ideals, and thoughts of an individual also hold profound meaning in this world. Without the subjective, the objective would be sterile in the sense that there would be an absence of wonder about the world around us.

When we wonder about the known, and unknown, we are symbolically referencing the causal, and acausal. In addition, as we distinguish between the objective, and subjective, we find ourselves in the position of consciously being aware of the differences between the two. These opposing forces are necessarily tied in with one another, and represent the subconscious, and conscious realities of an individual. It is a mystery as to why we experience the subjective the way we do, but it seems to have an intimate relationship with objectivism in a strange way.

Psychology offers answers that traditional belief systems fail to provide, inclusive of theories relating to the subconscious, and neurological processes. The work of Dr. Freud offered distinguishing theories relating to human sexuality, and often touched on the subconscious. Dr. Carl Jung emphasized the primitive from the modern in a way that described a great deal of what might be going on in our unconscious minds in relation to the outside world.

We are still at the tip of the iceberg when it comes to understanding the human mind, but as new theories come together, there are new ways of viewing the human condition from a mental standpoint that continue to arise. Part of our sense of despair as human beings I believe stems from the depths to which our ignorance of reality is ever present. We have a limited knowledge to work with, and our life dwindles before us daily.

When we face with bravery the prospect that there may be no meaning to be had, we can then decide if we wish to create a future for ourselves, or no. This is as straight forward as I can get when describing the choices we have in our lives. Should we continue to toil in this world after realizing this reality, we proceed with full knowledge of the possibilities of additional suffering, and disappointments.

In the case that we decide to no longer be interested in what the future holds, there are the unfortunate choices to commit suicide, or live in a nihilistic fashion. I say unfortunate because when we die, we also deprive others of our presence, and perhaps in some way we have an impact on others that would be a tremendous loss to experience (for them). It is also unfortunate in that it deprives the individual of further possibilities to create, idealize, and live out a reasonable life.

Of course, we would have to further define what a reasonable life consists of. Sometimes there are no options to live a '*reasonable*' life because of excruciating physical, or mental pain. Medications and healthy life choices can only take one so far. If there is a tremendous amount of suffering involved in continuing to live, there should be options for that individual that maximize the principle of self-agency through the will. This is inclusive of physician assisted suicide, of which I have spoken at length in my work *Reflections on Death, Suicide, and Ethical Euthanasia*.

Perhaps there is a poetic sort of freedom to be found in the possibility that nothing may indeed matter at all. This freedom can assist the individual in forging ahead creatively throughout life in a way that is not dismissive of the possibility of meaning either, but is not fettered by the darkness before them. This darkness is represented by the unknown, the dream-like states of consciousness, and the subjectively experienced. When we decide to capitalize on the inward facing ability to continue to live this life under these profound uncertainties, we are empowering ourselves in a way that is free of dogmatic restraints. This position places us firmly in post-modernity, for this situation is focused heavily on the ideal of the uncertainty principle.

Dr. Carl Jung, in *Modern Man in Search of a Soul*, mentions a very serious topic when he points out that upon entering an advanced age considerable thought should be given to one's own death. He also states that it is a serious taboo among the younger generations to fixate themselves on death, for whatever reason society might have. He states plainly that "Ageing people should know that their lives are not mounting and unfolding, but that an inexorable inner process forces the contraction of life. For a young person it is almost a sin - and certainly a danger – to be too much occupied with himself; but for the ageing person it is a duty and a necessity to give serious attention to himself." Just as it was in his day, this phenomenon of putting off one's own contemplation of their death until an advanced age is still profoundly entrenched in society.

There is a veritable cult of youth which still pronounces itself greatly in our society. This cult is unseen, unspoken, and quietly forces itself upon the general populace in a way that is insidious. Whether this condition is found through commercial advertising, general targeting of audiences, or a seeming way-of-life, youth worship has not gone to the wayside just yet. We are constantly bombarded by images, videos, and descriptions of youth that is covered with a sickly-sweet admiration for something so ephemeral.

What is more salient here is that the cultural worship of youth is ingrained heavily into every aspect of society. As it is an expected part of daily life, the conceptualization of death as an encroaching reality is not considered a generally okay topic to discuss. This has somewhat advanced over time, with new voices speaking on behalf of those who are terminally ill regardless of age. Nonetheless, death remains a topic that is best left in the closet until one is forced to confront it.

This is, of course, a sad state of affairs for death comes rather suddenly for many, and still others have no chance to contemplate upon their own deaths at all. A question may arise regarding whether it is worth it to even think on something that is inevitable such as death. Perhaps this is subjective as well, but I argue that it is certainly worth it for the self-therapeutic benefits.

Religious ideals formulate conceptualizations of inward-facing problems that exist because of consciousness within mankind. Death is described in terms that do not fully explain the biological processes that are necessary to understand before reflecting on them. To clarify, I mean that the sciences apply principles of physical objective truths regarding death, and religious ideals are mere commentaries regarding it. This is not to say that religion does not hold some form of benefit for the individual. It certainly forms a way a person should think based off pre-selected ideals, and beliefs. This is merely an observation based on the conceptualization that science is a category of its own, and religion another.

Nonetheless, a self-aware conceptualization of death from a psychological, and scientific standpoint, allows the individual to become more fully aware of their predicament at length. Whether this is a benefit cannot fully be known at this moment in time because that would require access to everyone's individual experiences from a subjective point of view which is currently an impossibility. We can monitor individual brain wave states, but we do not fully understand what is within the depths of the subconscious. Perhaps self-awareness, and scientific knowledge can provide a boon for those who are seeking greater insight into their own deaths. It may be the exact opposite effect for some, because of the revelations of frightening truth that are not easily digestible for many.

As we enter newer, and more advanced technical states of living, scientific knowledge becomes more precise throughout time alongside our experiences. This is because research is happening every single day regarding the processes of life, and death. Biology is less of a mystery now than it was three hundred years ago. Psychology has advanced tremendously in the past one hundred years alone. Both fields offer insight into the processes of death through focusing on different aspects of the same objective truths. One focuses on the mind, and neurological states, while the other deals with physical processes of organs, and bodily systems. If we are to find any sort of foundation in objectivity, we must rely on these two forms of knowledge to begin our journey towards the truth.

CHAPTER SEVEN

We can learn a lot from primitive man, particularly in relation to how sentience shapes our world.

All organic life is in the throes of an inimitable suffering of being which manifests itself as a struggle. According to Charles Darwin in the *Origin of Species* "A struggle for existence inevitably follows from the high rate at which all organic beings tend to increase. Every being, which during its natural lifetime produces several eggs or seeds, must suffer destruction during some period of its life, and during some season or occasional year, otherwise, on the principle of geometrical increase, its numbers would quickly become so inordinately great that no country could support the product. Hence, as more individuals are produced than can possibly survive, there must in every case be a struggle for existence, either one individual with another of the same species, or with the individuals of distinct species, or with the physical conditions of life."

When there is an immense struggle, there exists a need for a change which often involves the destruction of several of the species. There is a clear plane of suffering here, and this involves us because we are in the midst of it. War, poverty, systemic racism, and socioeconomic factors combine to create a 'civilized' version of the primitive aspects of the annihilative factor here. We are destined, it seems, for the grave, no matter which way you put it, simply because of our very existence. Nonetheless, we carry on as if there were no end in sight to our lives, because looking at things in a different light might just make an individual insane. This insanity is based on a dichotomy between the survival instinct, and death.

Primitive man struggled with survival, the search for sustenance, and a basic idea of how to manipulate the world through the subjective interest in the arts, as well as tools for survival. When man saw that there was death, a change quickly overcame the species in such a manner that it spread psychologically into every aspect of life. Humankind was not simply sentient in the knowledge of existence, but of non-existent awareness. This created a further dichotomy between the will to live, and the death drive.

One can imagine, in the primitive epochs of our species, the way that man, and woman lived. There was obviously a great struggle, because of the need to shelter from natural elements, as well as continue exercising the will to survive through the death of other animals. I imagine a world filled with bloodshed, and a harsh way of life. There was considerable loss of life through unnatural means due to fighting, as well as the primitive nascent expressions of war. This is not to mention the lack of medicine available.

Our search for sustenance not being enough for us, we drew on cave walls, and imagined a world of the supernatural to explain the unexplainable. It was here when the soul of mankind became blighted through the development of the subjective. The way we look at the world, and the way the world is, are often at odds with one another. The subjective encounters the objectively known, and is interpreted through unconscious, and conscious processes. These processes develop as an artform behind ideas that are often baffling to us, such as death. We, as a species are involved with this form of creation unique to us, because we are ultra-sensitive to the knowledge of the world we possess.

The world is present in a way that mankind can process (to a limited degree) the prospect of death through the lens of chaos. This chaos has penetrated the very soul of individuals since time immemorial. Since the beginning of our species, there has been competition, murder, and general violence to mark the history of humankind. We are, in a way, the ultimate predator, because we possess knowledge of the depths of things, and a ferocious ability to destroy things around us. Human beings are at the center of a swirling chaos that never ends, save for in death.

It is through our unconscious rendering of the primitive psyche in our daily lives that we promulgate inner desires as part of our objective world. We cry out for the will to be satiated, but it never is. We are always looking for the next big excitement in life, but eventually realize the futility in that (one way or another). It seems as if every aspect of our innermost desires is corrupted by the objective world because it is often part of an unrealistic expression of the will. These conflicts pit the subconscious against the conscious, and the acausal against the causal.

The objective world is filled with all those things that can be known through mathematics, scientific inquiry, and mutual experiences that represent consistent truths. There is no space for flights of fancy, save for those which are reserved for the discovery of some new technology, or invention. Dreams have little to do with the objective world, save for its influence on the production of physical, or theoretical ideas. In other words, the fantastical is relegated to the subconscious mind, and the limited realities to objectivity.

The primitive psyche is forever imprinted upon us whether we like it or not because it is a foundational aspect of who we truly are. We are predators, and we seek out the destruction of others through our bloodthirstiness whether it be through literal or figurative acts of selfishness. There are, of course, aspects of humanity which counteract the predatory state, such as empathy, love, and mutual care for one another. These aspects are more advanced, and are indicative of just how far we have developed as a mature species. Nonetheless, there is a bloodthirstiness within each one of us.

Destruction is a natural part of life, and we are sufficiently entrenched in the business of death through our lifestyles of casually exploiting individuals through our tastes. Convenience has replaced barbarity, but it still shows forth a level of cruelty that is even greater than savagery. The less we look at the truth, the more we can stay complacent where we are. Convenience has allowed us to choose which truths we look at, and which ones we ignore for our own benefit.

Returning to the ideas set forth in the *Origin of Species*, Charles Darwin states that "No complex instinct can possibly be produced through natural selection, except by the slow and gradual accumulation of numerous slight, yet profitable, variations. Hence, as in the cases of corporeal structures, we ought to find in nature, not the actual transitional gradations by which each complex instinct has been acquired — for these could be found only in the lineal ancestors of each species — but we ought to find in the collateral lines of descent some evidence of such gradations; or we ought at least be able to show that gradations of some kind are possible; and this we certainly can do." Darwin points out something very poignant to this discussion, and that is that complex instincts are found through a very slow, and variable nature that changes how we react to the world around us.

We learned of death from the onset of life, and through sentience have gradually created complex systems of remembrance for those who we have lost. These systems, entrenched as they are in religious, and cultural ideals, are temporary antidotes to the senselessness of death. What I mean by this is that ritual, and rites of passage provide a temporary balm to the deep wounds created through the loss of a loved one. The rest of the work is in the subjective world of the individual. This is a trait we have evolved to exploit through our social expectations, and outlook on the world around us.

As we develop as individuals, we are influenced by the sociological as well as the subjective. There is a dual action here that is developed within us; one involves developmental psychology, while the other is more of a primal throwback to our ancestral roots. Death is a phenomenon which is both scientific, as well as personal to the individuals who are touched by it. It is through death that we are informed psychologically of our inner natures, which are often conflicted with one another. These conflicts appear to us to be diametrically opposed to our understanding of how life *should* be, at least in our estimation which is wholly subjective itself. The subconscious mind is continuously battling these concepts every day.

We, as modern humans have inherited complex, yet paradoxically primitive instinctual expressions of being. To clarify, I mean that we are groomed for civilization through early development in life, yet we inherited a primitive instinct for survival which conflicts with the idea of death. It is through the experience of death that we can focus on the unknown aspects of our persona in a psychological way. Psychology allows for us to gain clues, and new perspectives on why it is we think the way we do. It is a complex science involving research into why, and how we react to situations the way we do. Psychology searches into the very heart of humanity through the complexities of the human brain, and those processes which involve a pronounced set of solutions as to why it is we develop as we do.

It is through the primitive that we gain insight into how it is our ancestors may have thought about life, and death. We must be willing to reach out into the distant past, and see with our survivalist eyes the treacherous nature of life from the aspect of forgotten generations. Without our modern conveniences, we would return to that primitive nature that still dwells within us on a psychological level. The fear of the dark, of the still night, and the creatures that dwell nearby; all those things combine to provide a sort of feral awareness of what it must have been like thousands of years ago.

From our bloodthirsty days of primitive existence to our modern civilized way of living, there is a profound impact that the entirety of our history has had upon us on a mental level. We cannot say that we are removed entirely from our ancestral past in terms of instinct, though we have learned to hone our impulses in socially respectable ways. This is where the death impulse becomes present, and expresses itself through the manifestations of creativity, and art. Without these two things there would be a tremendous hole in the heart of humanity, for the creative spark allows for an opening of consciousness that involves the subjective communicating with objective reality. In the end scheme, we are destined

to be at constant war with ourselves regarding instinct versus learned behaviors.

As we realize our smallness in scale to the rest of humanity, in terms of sheer numbers of individuals living their lives, we become transformed by the idea of our own insignificance in the grand scheme of things. This is something that we do not always actively contemplate on, but when we do, it is a tremendously profound feeling that is hard to place into words. When we take things a step further, and realize our insignificance amongst heavenly bodies such as stars, and planets, we then can weep (or laugh) at our sad predicament.

The whole of humanity is insignificant in the big picture. This much is obvious by the fact that space, and heavenly bodies are gigantic in size, and we are floating alone on a rather insignificant planet. These bodies do not consider our existence, as we are mere parasites upon the Earth, and upon its limited resources. We are insatiable with the lengths we will go to for instant gratification through the use, and slaughter of other creatures, and the domination of other human beings. The inordinate effects we all have on the environment around us prompts us to consume more, and more until there is no future for those around us left behind.

Here is a sad testimony to humanity, and its legacy of destruction in the wake of the duration of the existence of the species; that there is an aspect of the human condition crying out for freedom where there is only doom in the end. We are conditioned to believe that there is more permanence, than impermanence in this world. This is a false belief because all things are impermanent, regardless of extenuating conditions in our lives. Upon realizing this, the human spirit is imbued with a melancholy that extends beyond mere tragic realization. It is a profound depression, which can only be resolved through more distractions, or death. This theory is based on the idea that when the individual realizes there are limitations to the will, there are also imposed limitations on the desire to live. These imposed limitations are based on the concept that all positive

actions, and situations, are dependent on station in life, and overall living conditions.

Though sentience can be said to be profitable, as it assists with our survival, and propagation as a species, it is also a tremendous responsibility cast onto each one of us. This responsibility is based on the concepts of the need to maximize our individual agency in relation to our interactions with others. Our agency is based on desires made into reality through the will, and must be respected for there to be any equity in this world among human beings. Though we are capable of terrible things, we are also capable of amazing gestures of kindness. I theorize that our ability to moralize comes more from intuition on how to treat others than on learned belief.

All we have in the end is our record on how we have treated others, but this is not enough in our search for meaning. This is a mere footnote in the many ways that, through respect for ourselves, we can treat others in a positive manner. We may find that annihilation is the only truth, but we can fall into that abyss while at the same time treating others with respect. Even in annihilation there are unknowns. What lies beyond death? No one knows. So, it would be prudent to treat others in a way that maximizes personal agency in the meantime.

This is, of course, merely theory we are talking about, and it could be just as right to drop all belief in maximizing personal agency for the expression of the will. There is a consummate void here, where there are no direct, and clear answers for how we should live. Perhaps the best option is to live as if it were a truth that maximizing personal agency is the goal in life. It just very well might be. Nonetheless, we must turn our attention to the concept that sentience, though profitable, is a grave responsibility saddled onto each one of us. It is in this aspect of self-awareness that we must decide to leverage what we do know against what we do not know. Though the abyss is deep, and wide, our limited knowledge can save us in times of moral questioning.

CHAPTER EIGHT

How does art transform agony into an external creative force?

The human mind is the center of all the arts, creative displays, as well as scientific discovery. According to Dr. Carl Jung, in his work *Modern Man in Search of a Soul*, "It is obvious enough that psychology, being the study of psychic processes, can be brought to bear upon the study of literature, for the human psyche is the womb of all the sciences and arts. We may expect psychological research, on the one hand, to explain the formation of a work of art, and on the other to reveal the factors that make a person artistically creative." Dr. Jung's insights are very poignant, particularly because it is true that there is a centeredness to the discovery, and application of knowledge through the arts, and sciences.

It is through the mind that we learn to divulge to ourselves the power that is behind all our efforts in life. The suffering of individuals can be mitigated by utilizing the arts (and sciences) to the benefit of others. What I mean by this is that when we act upon the creative instinct within us, we are externalizing our own healing processes for the benefit of others. Think of the great works of art throughout history, and you will see how others have benefited by them.

Life becomes enriched when there is a decision to actively participate in creating the inner desires of the will into a profound manifestation in the objective world. Individuals are meant to experience the contrasts of all that life has to offer, inclusive of suffering, and pleasure. This is observable by the fact that we exist in between the subjective internalized world of our minds, and the objective outside world at the same time.

We must be willing to focus directly on the conceptualization that art is a projection of the inner desire of mankind. To clarify, I mean that what makes us unique among the species is our ability to give birth to distinctive abstractions through the expression of the artistic. When we focus on the abstractions that we can produce, we then redirect our energies toward creation rather than destruction (of the self). The self, as a construct, is elevated through the works of the artistic, and scientific, and is edified by the cohesiveness of mind that occurs. In the discovery of new worlds of knowledge through learning, human beings can soften the blow of the existential despair caused by the awareness of death.

By focusing on learning, self-expression, and artistic release, the individual is elevated beyond the mere caricature of a life we are sometimes reduced to when we think on our mortality. There is an element of remembrance to be found through creative works that might possibly outlive the life of the individual. This remembrance is codified in each one of us through an intense desire made reality. As we sculpt, and chisel our way through the difficulties of life, we set forth to create a lasting impression on the world far beyond our death. This is of course a choice, and many choose to not see things this way, which is fine. It is only one option among many, but I argue that this is the path of least resistance whereby individuals can find meaningful experiences in this arguably meaningless existence.

Art is the closest man can come to the divine, and live to tell the tale. This sentence holds no inner meaning other than the obvious, which is to say, that it is based on the idea that the fantastical is made reality in a harsh objective world. This world is organized functionally in a way that is orthodox, and will not be swayed by the subjective. However, it is true that art can bring the subjective ideals of mankind into the forefront by means of sharing the creation with the outside world. When we share our creation, others take part in it, in a way that is sort of a communion of individuals. This communion becomes sacred through the transmission of ideas that are unorthodox in an orthodox world.

Art allows the individual to express the various shades of existential grief that are incumbent upon those who survive traumatic experiences. There is a tremendous library of works out there in the world that deal with grief, including classical poetry leading up to the 21st century. It is in our present, however, that we are faced with advancements in ideas that the minds of our ancestors have never had to experience. Our knowledge of science, and how we die, has advanced greatly in the past one hundred years alone. It is through the sciences that we are forced to express ourselves in some artistic way to find meaning deeper than what the objective provides us. This is not to say that science is not a fulfilling pastime, or mode of study. What I am saying is that the artistic allows that which cannot be expressed through words a means whereby the individual becomes a survivor through the medium.

Creativity goes hand in hand with the whole of human existence. This expression is primal in one sense, and highly advanced in another. What I mean by this is that there is a touch of the primitive to be found in the arts, but much sophistication through its mode of expression. Take ballet for example; it is a form of highly complicated choreographed movements that form a story to tell the audience. At the onset, the act of dancing is a phenomenon that we have always been knowledgeable about throughout recorded history. Our most primitive of ancestors probably danced in some fashion or another, though how far back this phenomenon goes is a mystery lost to the sands of time. Nonetheless, ballet is an expression that is at once highly sophisticated, and regressive as a primitive throwback to our ancestors hidden from time.

Psychologically, the act of creation allows for the individual to express a tremendous amount of what I call the *unfulfilled* desires onto a physical medium. These desires are what the will is unable to express onto objective reality either due to some taboo, or circumstantial reason. In whatever way these desires are not expressed in the physical world there is an opportunity for the artist to create a masterpiece of immense profundity due to the outrage of (mis)fortune in our lives.

When we focus on the artistic, we can communicate in a language that is beyond words. Every culture has some form of art that is available to be seen, and interpreted by others of another culture. It is more flexible than language, because imagery, audio, and other depictions on various media allows for the emergence of inter-communication that is distinctly, and universally human. It is through this form of creation that people can understand each other better without the need for traditional language, or customs.

The artistic can be seen as a form of escapism as well, but that is not what I am focusing on here. The main concern that I have is to effectively demonstrate that art *can* be used to transcend the mundane, and limited. It becomes a form of escapism when there is no grounding in the objective world behind it. This is not to condemn escapism either, for it is through the creation of internalized worlds that the individual has a chance to survive the improbable as bearer of the knowledge of death, and time.

In the focus on time, we see that we become mature, get old, and then frail, before dying. Animals die after living their lifespans, as well as plants, and other vegetable matter. Everything is destined to die. All this seems rather elementary. But there is something else working behind the scenes of our subconscious. It seems that there is another function in survivalism that has allowed us to adapt, and that is the creation of works of art. Creating art allows us to not only soften the blow of eventual death, but to find meaning in the process of a life well lived.

As there is a cultivation of individual strength through the artistic celebration of personal agency, each one of us has the potential to find meaning through our own creations. This is a uniquely human trait, in that it is, as mentioned before, both primitive, and sophisticated in its expression. This expression of personal agency is found in each one of us, and is a form of self-creation through empowering one's own thoughts with a physical form through art. It is the artistic that allows those who are suffering from incredible hardships a look into a world of the fantastical, and unreal.

The visual impressions that art gives to us allows us to internalize those subjective things which exist only in our minds. This has been somewhat explored in my writing thus far, but I would like to look into it a bit deeper. The objective, being as fixed as it is, can be penetrated by the subjective through creative works of art. When we visualize a sculpture, or a painting, we can see through the eyes of the artist (at least to a degree). We may individually interpret what we are looking at, but the push toward the subjective is always present. Someone who has a subjective vision, and creates a work of art is projecting their subjectivity onto others, who then look at, and interpret the creation in their own mental world.

As the desire to create springs forth from an individual, it then becomes released onto the outside world where it can flourish on a more profound level. This allows others to interpret, and function on a level that is not wholly objective, but is embracing towards reflection, and an inner world. Art is where the birth of religious, and spiritual traditions are born from. It is through the creation of objects, and sounds, that we can partake in our own experience of death through the life altering subject matter presented in art.

Just as I mentioned prior, we are all subject to mortality, and change. There is no way around this truth, for it is something that we are all bound to experience at some point in our lives. Art allows us to pause, and reflect on our knowledge of death through abstractions, and vivid depictions of daily life. The primitive exists here, just as it does when one partakes in a religious ritual, because it is all based on the psyche, and the need to fulfill death rites under the guise of celebrating life.

When a major life event occurs, it is natural for there to be an accompanying religious rite in many cultures. Art is a rite in, and of itself. It is the ultimate form of the primitive, and sophisticated, all at once. There is a chaos involved in the creation of anything meant to be utilized as an art piece. This chaos gives form to a means by which an individual can work toward a better understanding of what it means to be human. As there is a sense of the personal here, this understanding is highly subjective as well.

A conception of art as a catalyst for internal consciousness awareness is crucial to understanding the big picture of things. We can go about life without experiencing art, or creativity, but it would be accompanied by a sense of profound longing, and loneliness in its wake. Art may not be able to answer those existential burning questions about meaning, but it allows the individual to *create* meaningful experiences. In all cultures there is a form of art that is meant to tell stories, inspire, and invoke a sense of the fantastical. It is here where is an elevation of the human spirit takes place through self-creation, and self-empowerment.

Of course, there is the issue of despair which also exists in the creation of art, and visual aesthetics. A certain despair always exists underlining the creation of even the most absurd, or 'happy' of art. It may not be readily visible, but it exists as a seedy undercurrent of the artist made reality. This reality is forced upon the world in a way that gives the subjective a certain power that is subtle over individuals. What I mean by this is that the great influence of art is one in which the observer becomes a part of the conceptualization through self-association with the aesthetic creation.

What we cannot know is just how deeply we are indeed affected by the artistic in our lives. We can observe that it assists us in times of need through aesthetic considerations, as well as a look into the non-existent through visualization or audio. There is no specific method that I know of to judge just how deeply art affects us overall. What I do know is that it is a part of self-creation which activates the survival aspect of our primitive natures into overdrive.

Suddenly, it seems as if even the most traumatic experience is not enough to deter us from appreciating, and/or creating art. When we allow ourselves to embrace the creative, we are satiated to a small degree with our level of despair at being brought unto this existence only to eventually die. It is here that the individual can work towards a sense of self that, although constructed, maintains the desire, and will towards life. It is with this in mind that art appears to provide a form of salvation for the individual.

Art can change the objective world through visualization, audio entrainment, and color schemes that emanate from a mind that is deeply fixed in the subconscious. As I mentioned before, there is a limitation on how this change can be brought about, because it is wholly subjective in nature. Other individuals can see, and hear, the artistic in a way that allows both interpretive, as well as literal understandings of it. Whichever way one decides to view art, it is a tremendous source of healing power for human beings to experience.

Nonetheless, as mentioned, there is an element of despair here. Some art exists only to penetrate deeply into those topics of loss, hurt, suffering, and anguish, and to share that with the outside world. It is as if we are looking at someone else's wound, and realizing that it is the same as ours. We are locked into a penetrative web of various layers in this life that are so beyond our control as to make a mockery of our conception of freewill. Art allows for there to be some form of control, even if it is in a limited way, because the artist is settled in on exposing the deepest, and ultimately the profoundest aspects of his or her being.

Perhaps art is a gateway between this objective world, and the subjective fantastical in such a way that there is a dynamic relationship created here. We experience the truth of reality when we are forced to witness the passing of someone we love, just as we at times are forced to create art to alleviate the pain of existence. As the artist finds themselves locked between two worlds, both the objective, and subjective, there is an almost limitless access one has toward the expression of the unfulfilled will.

The human will is only partially satisfied, and can never be embraced by true freedom because of circumstances beyond one's own control. The great power of art is that there is a circumvention here that takes place within the hands of the artist, as it eventually becomes a guide toward survivalism in a grim, unforgiving world. In the darkest of shadows, the human being arises from the ashes like the phoenix, and penetrates the deepest recesses of the human heart through passionate exceptional artwork.

CHAPTER NINE

The tragedy of existence shows itself clearly when we are forced to confront our mortality.

"When a human being takes his life in depression, this is a natural death of spiritual causes. The modern barbarity of 'saving' the suicidal is based on a hair-raising misapprehension of the nature of existence." – Peter Wessel Zapffe, *The Last Messiah*.

When we lift the veil from our minds concerning death, which can happen from an early age, we are forced to confront our own fears regarding it. We are conditioned to believe that we are likely to have a long, and robust life which will no doubt (under normal circumstances) be due to old age rather than unnatural means, or disease. We also are conditioned to regard suicide as being something within the realm of the taboo, or a non-acceptable form of death.

Zapffe, in his work, makes it very clear that suicide is a fundamental human right that must be respected. It is through the desire of the will (which is limited) that those who are suffering look toward suicide as a form of salvation against incredible pain (either mental, or physical). It is an act that should no longer be demonized, or taken for a weakness of some sort. Before I go any further, I must preface my views with the concept that no one should ever encourage someone to commit suicide, but it should be respected as a fundamental right. In the wake of post-modern society, we are starting to see more communication regarding controversial human rights movements inclusive of those that fight for euthanasia rights. It is with this knowledge that we must begin our journey.

By being forced to confront our own deaths, we are charged with the duty of cultivating self-awareness in how we treat ourselves, and others. This is a movement toward natural moralism in that there is a co-benefit involved with working together as a species while reducing harm. It certainly fits in with the adage of doing onto others as you would have them do onto you. But it is more than just a recall of morals, and ethics. Here, due to the realization of death, we are humbled before our own approaching demise, and are in the position of needing to connect with others in a way that reduces pain, and suffering for the whole of humanity.

Morals, and ethics, are not as some traditional religions would have it, based on a conceptualization of some outside force that either punishes, or rewards us for our due diligence in this life. It is based on a search for inner wholeness that we look to remedy our existence by treating others with a sense of dignity, and respect. Of course, this sort of ideal is not practiced by everyone in this world, regardless of how aware of death one may be. It is a choice. When we elect to practice this choice, we become more self-aware, and have the possibility of experiencing a dignified death.

The other is no longer separated from ourselves when we consider dying because it is a universally experienced phenomenon. We encounter in the maturity of our years a sense of how others face suffering, pain, and frightful experiences. We have a choice to decide whether we will grow in empathy, or completely ignore this option, and live solely with ourselves in mind. There is a tremendous power in this choice because it empowers the individual with the task of either caring for others, or ignoring their plight, and circumstances.

We encounter death at every turn when we consider our own mortality. This is a form of meditation that requires a level-headed reaction towards it because we should want to empower ourselves with our duty to create in this world some form of legacy. Our deaths are extremely hard to conceive of, but it must be confronted for us to truly live at all. This is the unique tragedy of the human race; in that we must choose.

The death drive, as mentioned in my previous work, is a natural phenomenon that is as strong as the will to live. Now that we have confronted our own mortality, we are destined to make a choice as to how we are to live with it. This is where an individual becomes sole proprietor over his or her body, and mind. Our innate desire to avoid suffering calls out to us in a way that is stronger than life, or death. We must choose to continue, or abandon life, and enter the void through self-annihilation. This choice is crucial to the wholeness of human experience, in that it is part of the ongoing drama that is the history of mankind.

Within us there is a powerful force toward self-annihilation that is just as potent as the survivalist instinct. This force is relegated to our subconscious minds, insofar as it has been neglected by our conscious minds due to the taboo nature of it all. There are times when we become aware of this force, or aspect of human nature, because we are forced through traumatic events to recall what was originally hidden within our minds. Some experience this through post-traumatic stress disorder, or other pathological conditions of the body, and mind.

When we consider death, there is a sudden realization that we are manifestly the culmination of variable factors which materialize into what we currently know as the *self*. The self is appropriately mentioned here, because it is a construct of learned behavior, social cues, internal experiences, and subjectivism. This realization forces us to consider how we might just be subject to total destruction in death, and will cease to be what we currently are. Here is where there is an abstraction forced onto the heart of mankind; the likes of which no other experience can replicate.

In the darkness of our innermost thoughts, we bask in the knowledge of our demise through the lens of dissolving personhood. The self-agency that we had previously sought for becomes irrelevant to the individual that stares out into the void, and sees nothing. This is the ultimate moment of self-annihilation, where the individual becomes less than nothing through the abstractions of the mind on death. As these abstractions come from the unconscious individual, it is manifested in a unique way to each person.

The existence of pain itself, whether mental, or physical, is testimony to the tragedy of existence. We are not constantly in pain, so it is something that we do not actively reflect upon on a regular basis. When we do suffer, we are reminded of just how much we would wish that the pain would go away. We are amid a great chasm whereby we are forced to look into our own deaths through the encroaching experience of suffering, albeit at intervals. This is the ultimate tragedy of humanity; that we must suffer alongside the desire to be free from pain. Of course, the other great tragedy is knowledge of our own deaths as being inevitable.

Pain is positive in that it provides a form of active remembrance to the purpose of life, which is to continue living regardless of the level of discomfort, or near-constant suffering. By positive I do not mean that it is something to be wished for, but I am referring to the conceptualization that those moments when we do suffer are indicative that we are truly alive. When we do not suffer, it is negative. By negative, I am referring to the fact that nothing is happening to us that is painful.

Regardless of how much, or how little we suffer in this existence, any amount of discomfort is not to be wished for. It is inevitable, however, because we can either get sick, have something befall us, or experience a terrible accident, all of which might have the same outcome (that of death). Any amount of pain, suffering, and discomfort is a reminder of the eventuality of dying for the individual. Therefore, it is poignant when we suffer because our very lives appear to be at stake in those moments of experience.

The truth of the matter is that we are fragile, and susceptible to physical, or mental suffering in ways that are uniquely human. By this, I mean that the scale in which we suffer is by degrees more nuanced than any other creature on this planet because of our level of sentience. The amount of suffering we are capable of experiencing is tremendous, as has been evidenced by all the cruelties mankind is culpable of. Even now, in our post-modern society, we are at the mercy of our baser natures. It is through this base aspect of the natural world that we suffer even more.

It appears that there are times when we would wish to ignore the truth of human destiny, which is that of the grave. Emil Cioran, in *A Short History of Decay* declares that "The mind scrupulous of its distinct essence is threatened at every turn by the things it rejects. Often abandoning attention—the greatest of its privileges—such a mind yields to the temptations it has sought to escape, or becomes the prey of impure mysteries…Who has not known those fears, those dizzy spells, those deliriums which bring us back to the beast, back to the last problems? Our knees tremble but do not bend; our hands clutch without clasping each other; our eyes look up and see nothing. We preserve that vertical pride which strengthens its courage; that horror of gestures which saves us from spectacle; and the succor of eyelids to veil an absurdly ineffable gaze."

The abyss of non-being forces us to drink deeply of the truths that have befallen all our ancestors. It is death that compels us to live our lives in such a way that we are cognizant of the limitations of time. As we mature throughout the span of our lives, we become closer to those aspects of death which we previously may have ignored. We may catch ourselves in a moment where we pause to reflect on what dying might feel like, and we can *hardly* articulate our reflections to others using language.

Language provides somewhat of a means by which we can effectively communicate with others, but there are some experiences that do not have any sort of corresponding words, or descriptions to allow for this. This realization is the true horror of being, in that we are reduced to mute mannequins without any sense of self. We are caught in the crossfire of our desire to live, and die, and we cannot articulate our deepest reflection on things to bring us peace. This is the crux of humanity; in that we are destined to die without a full elaboration on what it means to go through this experience because words fail us. We can attempt to elucidate the experience of death by means of scientific knowledge on the physical processes surrounding decay, and putrefaction. This provides limited knowledge because it does not involve the subjective in any way. There is only objective knowledge here.

Cioran goes on further to elucidate the struggle between the so-called symmetry of life, and the asymmetrical. The philosopher continues by stating that "The apparent symmetry of joys and pains has nothing to do with their equitable distribution: it results from the injustice which strikes certain individuals, thereby forcing them to compensate by their despondency for the others' unconcern. To endure the consequences of their actions, or to be saved from them—such is the lot of men." It is here that Cioran is focusing on the situation that all mankind finds itself under; namely, that of the asymmetry of pleasure versus pain. There is a hinting here at anti-natalism which is beyond the scope of this work. The main intention here is to showcase just how bound we are to the limitations of our will, as well as desire.

This is another allusion to the great tragedy of mankind; in that it pits pain together with pleasure in the same sentence. We are destined to experience both things. Some of us experience more pain than pleasure, of course, all due to circumstances beyond one's control. Nonetheless, let us not take in regard alone the theory that our limited will is the source of our great dissatisfaction. It is only a part of the bigger picture. We are also dependent on outside factors which have nothing to do with our will at all. These factors are aspects of existence which we are all forced to experience at one point or another.

Our subconscious mind is also very powerful here in that it assists in furthering the downward spiral that is created through the realization of the lack of control we have over our destinies. Our objective experience of suffering translates into the subconscious mind via traumatic events beyond our control. As Cioran states, there is an injustice that some experience that reflects this deeply felt pain, and sometimes joy. Either way, we are all destined to be on the receiving end of some form of injustice or another. Regardless of what we ourselves can do to further the misery in this world, we are also very insecure in that we are also subject to intense experiences of suffering as well. These experiences are foundational in that they affect the individual in a profoundly deep way.

Existence is full of pain, suffering, inconceivable disappointments, and some modicum of joy. There is no symmetry between these variables. Here there is only chaos. This is one reason why some philosophers may argue that human life should no longer be propagated actively. The reasoning behind this is not simply one of asymmetry, but also of the nature of suffering itself. It is through suffering that we realize that it is a greater harm for individuals to be forced to experience the horrors of life. It is arguable that the void of non-being is preferrable to active suffering of any kind. Those who do suffer experience the dark side of what it means to be human, because it is transformative in its own way.

Children, and seniors who are forced to suffer from terrible pathologies such as cancer are tragic examples of the human experience. It is through the suffering of those who are the most vulnerable that we learn that life is extremely fragile, and weak. The fear of suffering also brings out the worst in humanity, for it creates psychological pathologies which can either be self-destructive, or scapegoated onto others. When we do not suffer, we end up in a situation where we are in a void of experience. We find ourselves in this void when there are no active forces working against us, and our best interests.

The disappointments we experience, being the result of a thwarted conception of desire faltered through our lack of control over our own lives, serves only to enunciate just how powerless we are in our daily lives. Our sphere of control is extremely limited, and does not extend to certain factors such as illness, old age, mental conditions, or other pathologies. Our DNA is the result of antiquated epochs of evolutionary change, all of which serve to benefit us in some way toward the goal of survival. There is, of course, the death impulse of which we must be actively aware. This impulse, being toward self-annihilation, is a paradox in the overall experience of what it means to be human. It exists because we see the evidence of its existence throughout the history of mankind. In every culture, there exists a form of fascination toward death which ranges from the scientific, to the fantastical.

CHAPTER TEN

The conception of war is an example of how mankind externalizes a very real internal conflict.

According to Dr. Freud in his work *Reflections on War and Death*, "The civilized adult also likes to avoid entertaining the thought of another's death lest he seem harsh or unkind, unless his profession as a physician or a lawyer brings up the question. Least of all would he permit himself to think of somebody's death if this event is connected with a gain of freedom, wealth, or position. Death is, of course, not deferred through our sensitiveness on the subject, and when it occurs we are always deeply affected, as if our expectations had been shattered." Regardless of the position in where we find ourselves in life, we are always beset by grief of some kind when someone dies. We are affected deeply in ways that we do not consciously see.

There are ways that death consciousness can affect us in a myriad of ways that are incredible to think of, but ultimately all are necessary. Why are they necessary? Because they all relate to our own eventual experience of death. When we are amid conflict with another, say in a physical altercation, we are hurting ourselves as well. War is a grander conception of this basic idea, where all humans involved hurt one another to varying degrees, leading up to death. When we actively seek to maim, hurt, or kill another human being, we are killing something within ourselves. This *something* can be selectively tied in with the death impulse because it is in self-annihilation that the individual finds themselves encountering the truth of their existence for the first time.

When we consider the violence that is wrought upon others during times of war, we then come to the realization that we are externalizing profound internal battles within ourselves. These battles are driven deeply within our breast, and extend unto the outside world as manifestations of some form of disorder. War itself being a symptom of a greater disorder; the individuals involved find themselves at odds with their own greater natures toward survival. Death becomes at once forbidden, and then expected at the same time. We are all pawns in the chess game of life to the warring ideologues of our time. This is what life, and death comes down to on a primal level (which hasn't left us).

All the externalized violence we observe through acts of war are a macro level manifestation of a very real internal conflict. When we commit acts of violence upon others, we are in turn harming ourselves. Just like there is a conflict between the survival mindset, and the death impulse, the terrible acts of war are expressed variables of the dichotomy that exists between peace, and conflict. Everything we experience is in direct conflict with an opposing factor, and war is no exception. This is another great tragedy of the sentient nature of mankind; that there is a constant warring within of opposing forces.

These opposing forces are strong enough to influence us to such a degree that we act upon our impulses in a primitive way. What I mean by this is that those who are within the center of war on the frontlines are merely acting for survivalist impulses, yet these impulses are laced with the specter of death.

It is through the fighting, and primal impulse toward violence that individuals are fulfilling a subconscious desire toward self-defeat. This is part of the delicate details of what comprises the human state; in that there is a dichotomy present for every thought, and a conflict for every desire. Each of these things are always present in human consciousness; they are just amplified in times of war. In the moments of severe conflict, there is an organic expression of a portion of what it means to be human, which is to be engulfed in self-annihilation through savagery.

In the work *Philosophy of War*, Émile Boutroux attempted to emphasize the point that there is a distinction between force, and right. For Boutroux, "It is important to understand the relation that exists between the idea of right and that of force. Force is not right. A universally victorious and omnipotent force would form one with divine force; justice and force, then, meet at one point and one point only, where both are absolute." When we consider the idea that there are considerable distinctions between all human experience, we understand the vital subtleties that are dichotomies at work. This is evident in war, specifically as it relates to right, and force.

The only rights that we truly possess, in my estimation, are that of self-preservation (or self-annihilation). How we get to either of these things should be based on a minimalization of harm towards others in the process. War enacts an expansion of harm which affects individuals on a personal level, even though these affectations are directed at a macro level through plans, and procedures that aim to sterilize the effects of death upon others as being justified. This is where there is an additional dichotomy between the individual, and society at large.

The individual focuses on self-preservation (or the opposite) on a very small scale, whereas a warring society focuses on expansion of rule through conquest. These two ideals are at odds with another, because the individual is already engaged in a personal battle with their inner selves. War externalizes this inner conflict toward the self, and branches it out to include others that are often dehumanized for justification purposes. This dehumanization ultimately subconsciously affects the individual because there is a depersonalization from the suffering of others happening at the same time. In addition, this lack of being in touch with objective reality is not only unhealthy, but it is something that always affects the individual even after a warring state has come, and gone. What we do to others, we see the results within ourselves even if it is only on a psychological level. Our actions forever become stained with our own self-loathing, fear, and wavering empathy contrasting with the desire toward self-annihilation.

Our conception of right, morality, and justice are focused heavily on conflict within ourselves, other individuals, and the citizenry of the world at large. What I mean by this is that there are levels of conflict that exist within us which affect us on a personal level beyond that of external violence toward others. We, in turn, deflect that self-violent propensity toward others to quench the incredible pain of being. It is a cycle that exists continuously as complications in desire, intent, ideal, and culture conflict with one another indefinitely.

Returning to the idea of Boutroux where force, and right are distinct from one another, we become acutely aware of our inner conflicts directing us as if we had no control over our impulses. The desire to live, and survive, versus that of self-annihilation is a strong one. It is also a primordial example of the dichotomies that exist within us as human beings. These dichotomies express themselves through chaos, versus order, and the limitations of the will, versus the objective circumstances we find ourselves in. War is another way for there to be an expression of these dichotomies because we seek to survive, yet injure or kill an opposing force in a very visceral way.

The world continues to go on, even through the worst of humanity, and its warring nature. We find ourselves at an ideological crossroads whereby the justification for war is at odds with our own personal ideals of self-preservation. These crossroads are present in a way that leads the individual to externalize very real internal subjective conflicts. As there is no true resolution toward the bloodthirstiness evident in humankind, there continues to be rationalizations for war.

For every ideal, thought, or desire, there is the opposite. This is a continuously present factor in the life of an individual because opposition represents the endless conflict within mankind overall. This opposition is prehistoric in that it has always existed within the lives of all our ancestors since time immemorial. We witness an expansion of the subjective conflicts of an individual brought out into the objective world through war. When we look at things in this light, we can see that the subjective has its place.

The way that war causes individuals to lose their sense of personal agency reflects deeply on how the will is limited. I have discussed this at length in my work *Essay on the Limitations of Free Will*, but it is pertinent that I also deal with this here because it is so relevant. We desire to have our will become reality in some way, even if it is impossible because of circumstance. When we are not able to realize our desires, we become despondent, because we then realize in some limited way that we are not truly free. War enunciates this truth because of the emphasis it places on the constant march of an irrevocable path toward annihilation.

The lack of personal agency comes from the fact that individuals are forced to fall into line with laws, orders, rules, and more. This brings about an ineffable despair that is beyond comprehension to those who have not experienced the horrors of war, inclusive of this author. As the despair becomes reality, there is a force within that calls for self-annihilation amidst the misery of the condition of a powerless individual. As I stated earlier, we are pawns in a chess game that is beyond our comprehension.

Even though we are guided by our baser instincts in war, we are still beholden to behave as if we were ordered by a higher purpose. This purpose is set forth in strategies, orders, and movement which distracts all involved individuals from the truth of war, which is that of pointless slaughter. This is all a part of our primitive nature, which is to destroy that which is preventing us from exercising our will. Empathy has no place here, because it is a zone that is exclusively cold, calculated, and beyond the understanding of the conscious mind.

Human beings are beset upon by tremendous forces that conspire against the conceptualization, and reality of freedom. Objectively, freedom does not completely exist for us. There will never be a time when war does not in some form exist, because it is simply a part of our baser natures. We can augment ourselves in ways that limit our more primitive impulses, but these things will always be there. We cannot escape the nascent brain of man, which is full of imaginings, and tragedy through self-deception.

There is a battle within each one of us to become intimate with our own contradictions for the desire to live, and the drive toward death. These contradictions serve to provide a gateway whereby we can realize the fact that all things have an opposite. Life leads to death, chaos leads to order (sometimes), and the denial of the freedom of the will through various circumstances beyond our control all serve to deliver onto us a list of dichotomies working against one another. These dichotomies exist because our ideals are not always in line with the objective truth. Our subjective selves are often at odds with the objective outside world in terms of what can be considered real versus ideation alone.

As we find ourselves in the intimacy I have described above, we enter a maturity of being that is beyond the normal everyday experiences we are accustomed to. This happens perhaps once in a lifetime, if at all for some people. For others this is a contemplation that is part of a daily ritual of self-torture which is no doubt comorbid with other more profound psychological issues. This maturity of being is an example of how the human mind can align itself with the simple truths of life, and death.

War can be likened to a macrocosmic experience in comparison to the microcosm of internal battles for existence. It is through war that we can see a visualization of what each one of us experiences on an internal level in some way, because we become involved in the intimate destruction of personhood. Suicide is a form of a warring act against oneself, which mimics the macrocosm of battles that defeat thousands of individuals. Both the experiences of war, and internal battles coexist as manifestations of the chaos present within the primitive minds of human beings.

This is not to say that there is no nuance, or complication to the experience of war. Nonetheless, there is a primitivism that arises in an atavistic way even for observers of conflict which can hardly be put to words. Survivors of war return with a wordless understanding of the nature of death that only those with severe trauma such as suicidal ideation can understand. It is here that we are not merely speaking of death itself, but of the manifestation of it which is found in conflict.

The externalization of internal battles forces us to come to the realization that there is a pure reflection of despair in the heart of mankind. This despair is potent in that it is felt on all levels of the human spirit from the humblest of us to the elite. It is an experience that is on a level of existential anguish which guides us toward our own demise as we travel through this world of sickness, pain, and mental torment. We are daily thrown into the void of self-annihilation via those moments of clarity that we can see our future selves lying in the grave. In the interim, between those thoughts, are the moments where we live to survive another day.

I do not deny that there are joys to be had in life, and that there are profound experiences which are enriching to the individual. These joys exist but do not outweigh the manifestation of pain, suffering, and mental anguish overall in the grand scheme of things. Just because we may not experience extreme pain, it does not follow that others have shared a similar experience to us. At every given moment there is someone suffering a horrendous death, a terrible accident, or some other calamity which destroys or lessens the quality of life overall. While one person is enthralled by pleasure, another suffers indescribable pain. These things all must be weighed out, and must not be taken lightly. What I ultimately am hinting at here is that the suffering of life outweighs the joys we experience.

In the final estimation of things, there is an aspect of the self which is torn apart by the essence of war. Violence on any scale, inclusive of self-directed violence, is a manifestation of the death impulse present at all levels of society.

From a sociological perspective, we are driven toward death just as we are toward survivalism. All cultures have an aspect of the death impulse that manifests itself in symbolism, or other hidden traditions. These hidden traditions can become realized through culturally acceptable watered-down practices which sterilize the experience of death. Rites of religious beliefs, folkways, and aesthetic traditions all serve to point toward the experience of the death impulse in everyday life. War merely allows for there to be a sterilization of complex internal states to be directed toward others.

CHAPTER ELEVEN

It is certain that the will interacts with the despair of humankind through making conscious those desires which remain unfulfilled.

Emil Cioran, in *A Short History of Decay*, proclaims that "The idle apprehend more things, are deeper than the industrious: no task limits their horizon; born into an eternal Sunday, they watch-—and watch themselves watching. Sloth is a somatic skepticism, the way the flesh doubts. In a world of inaction, the idle would be the only ones not to be murderers. But they do not belong to humanity, and, sweat not being their strong point, they live without suffering the consequences of Life and of Sin." Those that coast through life oblivious of purpose, or meaning, remain in a state of almost non-existence through mental resignation of living in the moment. Those who are amid the struggle with the will versus the objective world exist in a state of survival versus the impulse toward death.

At some point we all enter a state of idleness, where we are somehow lulled into a moment of non-existence through the willful ignorance of the facts that precede our birth into this world. When we are in those states, we are in a survival mode, because our conscious mind does not wish to acknowledge the fact that we will someday die (at least not on a constant basis). Yet, we do have a knowledge of this, even if it seems nebulous to us. This knowledge affects us profoundly, even if it is a subject that is rarely brought up in casual conversation among people in general. Death pervades all aspects of our reality, and is the chief influencer among our cultural, religious, and individual rites of passage in life. This is a throwback to the primitive aspects of the individual whereby all fantastical ideas born from the subconscious become related to death in at least a basic way.

The limitations imposed on the will leverage a kind of contrast between subjective inner experience, and the objective world. This is especially so when it comes to our understanding of our own mortality. In the subconscious mind, there are images, ideals, constructions of thoughts, and visualizations that are testimony to our secret obsession with death. In the objective world, there are the sciences to teach us the processes, and causes of death through education. From a cultural perspective, we are ingrained from an early age with rituals of an informal kind (and some formal) which indoctrinate us into acceptable forms of understanding of death.

We have a limited control over our will, and the expression of our innermost desires. This fact is most salient in that we must realize that our understanding of death is informed by these limitations we must always confront. Death is the great equalizer, but it is also the gateway whereby the individual becomes humbled before the vastness of the truths of non-being. Even in life, where we are often victims of circumstances beyond our control, we have a foretaste of death in these experiences. It is a subtle experience, but it is there nonetheless because death pervades all aspects of life, inclusive of the survival instinct.

Death becomes a prominent truth that is focused on by many as life matures for them. The focus we see here is not necessarily profound, but it exists because of practical reasons such as a death in the family, or ailing personal health. These sudden changes are objectively traumatizing for the individual, especially if death or illness was never seriously discussed or contemplated sufficiently at an earlier age.

There is no guarantee that even someone that did contemplate in their youth the possibilities of death, and dying, will fare any better than those who have not. This is another aspect of the tragedy of sentience, in that there is a constant awareness of being ignorant of the fulness of the truth before us. We are unaware of the truth before us, though we may have a perfect anatomical, and biological understanding of what happens to us upon death.

Despair is a natural expression of the ordinariness of the world in a societal setting. We are discouraged from openly discussing the ramifications of death, and the preparation necessary for us to deal with our own mortality more healthily. Society has always been this way to a degree, though in more recent times at least some discussion is happening regarding the subject. From a sociological standpoint, the most damaging aspect in life is the insistence on youth culture being at the forefront of attention of the masses.

We are encouraged to worship youth as if it were the antidote to our own mortality, but it clearly isn't. In the madness that is found in the cultures of this world, there is nothing more maddening than the rejection of death awareness. Some ideas regarding our mortality are encoded in rites of various popular religions, and packaged in such a way as to sterilize the meaning of death. It is through death awareness that we can come to terms with our brevity in this life, and in turn choose to continue living or to self-annihilate.

The despair that we feel when we are confronted with death is one of the few pure emotions that we will experience in life. Moments of joy aside, the purity of despair lends itself to a more lucid understanding of the true nature of humankind. Joy allows us to appreciate life in a way that is also profound, but it does not trump the depths of despair as it is experienced by the individual. Those things which we create in life, whether it be through art, science, or individual accomplishment, do have a meaning, and purpose for us. All the above allow us to face death with a courage that is almost otherworldly in nature. This is, of course, if one lives a life of accomplishment prior to finding themselves in the throes of death.

This is not to say that a life of pure leisure is to be avoided. I do not argue against hedonism, nor do I contest with moderation. What I am saying here is simply that in preparation for dying there is a benefit to accomplishment as a psychological cushion for us to rely on. This benefit is found through the reliance on memories of those things that created meaning for us.

Inner sexual desires, emotionally centered needs, and other miscellaneous subjective thoughts create a baseline of unfulfilled circumstances that leave us with a tremendously heavy despair. We are complicated creatures, in that all our needs are multilayered, and often intertwined. Even through the sexual instinct, there is a focus on death that is wholly subconscious. We lust for things which appeal to us, not realizing that we are truly lusting after self-annihilation. By self-annihilation I do not necessarily mean that we could experience a painful death, but one in which all limitations of the expression of the will are finally resolved through the process of dying.

Desires that are unfulfilled become fuel for us to lust toward our own deaths in a subconscious way. We display outwardly the signs of survivalism, yet the death impulse is not far behind. This dichotomy of understanding is exquisite in that it is profound, yet tragic because it is the summation of the entirety of the human experience. What I mean by this is that we desire pleasure, life, and positive experience, yet our subconscious mind is focused on decidedly morbid predilections.

Our emotional needs, many of which are rarely met, are also at the center of the cause for our subconscious death drive. There is a return, psychologically, to the root of where all pain, and suffering began; that of the womb. We resort, in old age, to an inward turning that is based on introspection of the limits of one's own life. In between these very real experiences are decades of death denial that work against us in every way.

As we are in the throes of our own denial of death, there is a seduction throughout the general cultural experience that calls out to us in a subtle way. We are influenced by this subtlety in such a manner that we are thoroughly immersed in fads, fashion, and other modes of entertainment that serve to distract us from the real issues of life. In the despair of existence, we are either blinded through willful ignorance, or we are forced to face reality in an objective way. Even when we encounter an objective reality related to death, we tend to subjectivize what we learn from the experience.

Idleness is a symptom of a greater disease, which is that of the paradoxes created through unfulfilled needs, as well as the reality of the objective world. To be idle is not to be in some state of immorality by any means. What I am trying to say here is that through idleness, and the lack of pain, and suffering, there are still unfulfilled needs in the subconscious to be had. While we are sentient, there is no escaping the will, and the terrible pangs of desire that are caused by it. This is another one of those moments where we can reflect deeply on the tragedy of sentience.

It is through idleness that we feel the intensity of our unfulfilled dreams, hopes, desires, and ideals. Those moments where we are not called upon to perform some duty are deadly ones, because of the invitation toward introspection found in times of rest. In truth, we are never satisfied regardless of our current position in life. We could be fully idle, with few worries to our name other than the prospect of death, and still be in a great internal agony of being. This agony of being is found in all aspects of life for the human race because of the power that death holds upon us.

No, it is not idleness that is the cause of our distemper or lack of awareness of the dolorous situation we find ourselves in. Idleness is one state which only contrasts with others in its properties rather than in practice, because it is one aspect of many which the human being must experience. Individuals are called by nature to be inquisitive, and this is a trait that is present with us in all aspects of life. Even in a state of idleness, there is a perfect understanding of just how unfortunate our lot in life truly is.

The agony of being is strong within all aspects of the human behavioral spectrum. In survivalism, there is a degree of suffering that must be experienced to become stronger. In the primitive aspects of mankind, we are idle only through an overwhelming presence of being that is hard to put into words. When we experience the death of others, our resilience is tested, and made stronger through our will toward survivalism. Even in the throes of death we long for more life, though this longing may be in vain. We experience various aspects of death through life to become stronger.

Our desires to live, and to die, are locked in a constant battle with one another. This battle is based on irrevocable circumstances created by the fact of having been born into this world in a mortal, fragile body. We instinctually wish to survive, though our minds sometimes have other plans for us. It is through the pathologies of the mind that instinct is rendered unimportant especially in the post-modern world. Instinct is always there, but it is not emphasized to the level of mental desire as abstraction of thought is.

We find ourselves at the precipice of an incredibly dangerous situation when it comes to this life, especially in post-modern society. It is through the ambiguities of morality that contrast with one another in our globalized world that places one ideology against another. Ideologies have always clashed since the beginning of civilization, but this is more so a reality in our interconnected world. Modern society is a dystopia of warring ideologies that become internalized in the individual through the desire to live, and die. The macrocosm of conflict that exists in this world throughout society reflects the microcosm of the individual, and the struggle to survive.

The struggle between life, and death is always present because it is based on the context provided by the individual, and their access to conscious experience (which is quite complex). We wish to survive but not to have to suffer unbearably at the same time. The death impulse is close to those who are suffering terrible illnesses, either physical or mental. It is present not because of any sort of gravitation toward death, but because it is the result of not wishing to suffer a terrible fate while alive.

The self is present here because even though it is a construct, it is necessary to maintain some sense of individuality amid the conflicts that life presents to us. Until we are in the utter depths of complete unending suffering, we wish to live at least to some degree. We live in a world where the objective meets the subjective, and nothing is completely black or white. There is only so much suffering that an individual can go through, however it is hard to measure with accuracy this aspect of life.

Despair interacts with the will through sheer force of internalized consciousness made reality. It is always present even if only in a subtle way. The knowledge we have of our deaths, future possible illnesses, and possible misfortunes is enough to drive us all mad if we let it. Despair is unique in that there is no hope present. All that remains is the depth of profundity before the individual as they experience the bleakness of non-being prior to death through despair. In the finality of it all, we will eventually come to a point where we must accept our death as inevitable. Our despair at this knowledge, and acceptance, is present even when a stoic mindset is applied because humans are human, after all.

We can theorize about how we will react when our time comes, but none of these ideals hold ground until we experience dying for ourselves. In the meantime, we must rely on second, and third hand reports regarding the dying process. It is still the greatest mystery for us because we do not know what is going on inside another person's mind. We can only speak for ourselves, and it is because of this that despair sets in ever so neatly, and quietly.

Returning to the dichotomy of the death impulse versus the struggle to live, it must be recalled that both forces act equally within us. It is through the primitive desire to survive that we find ourselves continuously being influenced by in our daily lives. Similarly, the death impulse (or death drive) acts as a counterpoint whereby the individual seeks release from the extreme experiences of suffering. Death itself is not sought out as something that is better than a life without suffering, but is a phenomenon that is looked for as an alternative to incredible (and unbearable) anguish.

Our experience of despair is the result of the failed struggle within us to either survive, or self-annihilate. We remain, at that point in time, at a standstill where there are few options for us to look forward to. It is a state of pure abstraction where the only interaction that is sought is from the self. This is ironic, because it is the self that, being a construct, is also subject to the drive toward survival, and death. In the final assessment of things, the individual seeks self-annihilation in the ecstasy of despair.

CHAPTER TWELVE

Our post-modern society is rife with the internal conflicts which add to the tragedy of man through the sentient.

Gottfried Wilhelm Leibniz, in *New Essays Concerning Human Understanding*, states that individuals must seek out to quell any conflict regardless of being within a world where there is an incredible diversity of opinions. For Leibniz, "Since, then, men cannot avoid exposing themselves to error in judgment and having different opinions, since they cannot look at things from the same points of view, they must maintain peace between themselves and the duties of humanity amid this diversity of opinions without claiming that another should promptly change a rooted opinion upon our objections, especially if there is room for supposing that his adversary acts from interest or ambition or from some other private motive." It is here that Leibniz is attempting to reach some form of ecumenism of behavior that should be considered acceptable to avoid conflict, and even worse, states of war.

The additional tragedy of humankind is found in these conflicts that tear us apart from the inside out. The various ideologies, thoughts, ideals, opinions, and environmental factors that are involved in the construction of a mind is as unique as can be. There are of course socially appropriate mores, behaviors, and states of action that are becoming universally known and practiced among many in the civilized world. When we combine these things, there is a drifting toward the violent, the uncivilized, and the tragic. Each aspect of the failure of the human race to live in some form of intellectual peace is an additional factor towards the tragedy of sentience.

There are a multitude of conflicts that exist between human beings within the various strata of society, and each of these reside in deep seated ideological understandings, (and misunderstandings). This sends humanity spiraling further down the way of chaos, and misery. Each of these conflicts, whether they arise from ideological points of view, sociological phenomena, or some other aspect of the human mind only serve to further the despair that we experience at some point in our lives.

The uniqueness of each ideology provides only fuel for further misunderstanding, and disagreement among individuals. Religious ideals, social upheavals, and evolving behaviors among groups of people either serve to enhance, or mitigate this discord we find ourselves in. Not only do we have to worry about our own mortality, but we also must worry about how others enforce their moral codes on us. Our will is severely restricted, and this is seen at times when our own ideals differ with those of society at large.

It is the will that conjures up desire through the individual, and sends the signals to the brain that we are to act in some way to achieve a goal of some sort. When we are unable to achieve said goal, we become frustrated at a fundamental level. It is here where the person is confronted with despair, as the outside world is continuously at odds with the will of a minority individual. The subjective becomes affected as well, because we are influenced by what is happening to us on an internal level. Again, we are not only experiencing the world through an objective lens.

The objective world, and the subjective experiences of an individual interact though they would appear dichotomous with one another. Just like the will to live, and die are present at the same time, so is the subjective in relation to the objective. When we experience conflict, we are diminished in our ability to exercise the full freedom of the will, because others are in our way. The foundations with which humanity has grown, nourished, and maintained itself upon are full of antagonistic forces that only serve to destroy us on a fundamental level. It is through the conflicts that we experience with others that our annihilation is established.

Our instantaneous access to information via the internet of things allows us to observe more acutely the fractured nature of society as it stands today. Society has always been shattered, and torn apart, but it is more closely observable now that we have the technological access to see it with our own eyes as the chaos unfolds. News stories of mass shootings, the possibilities of war through political machinations, and a seemingly tireless exposure to classism surround us around the clock. We are exposed to a never-ending barrage of negative experiences that won't slow down any time soon. Ultimately, we must adapt to the chaos, or we will perish slowly through our own madness.

When we become aware of the suffering of others, there is a subjective pull toward wondering just how it might be for us if we were in a worse off position. Even the most hardened of individuals can understand that there is a connection between one person and another. Whether those individuals show some sort of empathy, or are capable of it, is another question. This is another aspect of the disjointed nature of human beings, and how we interact with one another.

Human beings are thoroughly segregated on an ideological level that is more subconscious than conscious. We have similar values to a certain degree, but even this is divisive. It is easy to look around, and observe how conflicted we are on any number of issues. There is a battle for control over human behavior because the locus of control does not extend to immortality. We are constantly policing ourselves in such a way that we distract ourselves from the fact that one day we too shall die. These conflicts are evidence of a dystopian hellscape that we currently are living through.

For the most part, we wish to avoid suffering as much as possible, and maximize our pleasurable experiences. This, of course, cannot take place because we are continuously in a conflicted world. We find ourselves in the midst of a great chasm of desire versus the objective world. This chasm is like a void because there is no way for there to be a resolution to the original desire.

For us to survive, we must socially rise above others through conflict, resulting in a primitive expression of dominance that lies deep within our subconscious minds. This can take place in the workforce, in private relationships, or through general interactivity with the outside world. This is a difficult truth to accept because egalitarian ideals are not seen here as being the most realistic way to look at things. Sure, it would be better if we were to have an egalitarian society that looks after the wellbeing of others. However, is this a society that is possible to live in, given the history of suffering that many nations have laid upon their own citizens?

We tend to not learn from our mistakes as a civilization because we live in a world that benefits from the suffering of others. Whether this benefit is in the form of crony capitalism, democratic freedom, or under any other banner of government of various stripes, there is an assurance of an abundance of suffering.

Certainly, there are those that benefit from the suffering of others. This is not an example of an egalitarian society, because we do not live in one. We do, however, live in a society that poses as one that maximizes personal freedoms, when in fact, it does the exact opposite. We are told what we can put in our bodies (via the pharmaceutical companies), how we can live (based on economic factors), and how we can die (based on local laws regarding the right to die). If this is not an example of a dystopia, I am not quite sure exactly what is.

Nonetheless, even with the conflicts that exist within this world, we attempt continuously to maximize our personal freedom through the expression of the will. This attempt is not conscious, but is something primal within each one of us. This primal nature is overwhelming especially in times of incredible suffering because it is cohesive with the will to survive (as well as die). It is here that we return to the dichotomy present within the will to live, as well as the death impulse. Nearly everything expresses itself in a dichotomy because there are categories within this world that have their opposites which we actively experience.

We live in a psychologically strangled society where there are ambiguities that conflict with deeply rooted traditions. We encourage ourselves to act out ceremonies such as marriage, and other rites of passage through religiously influenced foundations but our center of belief is becoming lukewarm to say the least. There are more states of ambiguity in this current social climate than there were one hundred years ago.

Belief exists, and is popular, though what exactly these beliefs consist of vary from person to person. We have crumbling foundations that are clearly waning as we enter a new technological age of post-truth. This age is based on discovering personal expressions of the will through divergent lifestyles, new ideals of egalitarianism, and a re-examination of traditional belief systems.

Through these new ideals come new problems for all of us to share with one another. What I mean by this is that there is a sense of insecurity with each change that happens socially, because not everyone is on board for ideological change. There remains a deeply rooted conflict within society that augments itself but never truly changes at its core. This conflict stems from the very heart of humanity in that it always follows us regardless of cultural differences. It is through these differences that we see just how common the thread of misery is that travels throughout the world in every human being.

Our release from traditional thought patterns is not something that will fully liberate us from our own conflicts. This is because our sentience allows for such a diversity of opinion that ideals, thoughts, and actions are contingent upon it. Where there is sentience, there is conflict, because our own vision of the world around us is likely to be far different than another person. This, at the very foundations of the human experience, is a feature of our objective world that we must accept. The reasoning behind this is that no matter how much we change, we remain the same. In this post-truth world, we are inventing new definitions of being that are subject to immense change within a short time frame. Death is never far behind us, because it is a specter that forever looms over our very being.

War itself is only one iteration of the conflicts which exist on a meta level within everyone. There are, as previously mentioned, religious, and philosophical conflicts as well. Those that are in power attempt to control the expressions of our conflicted states through diplomacy, but it does not always work. We can easily see the effects of the conflicts of idealism through random acts of violence that occur throughout the world at any given time. We live in a violent world, and it seeps into every pore of our being through constant exposure to the news of the world outside our homes.

Violence is one symptom of many conflicted states that emanate from all human beings. It manifests itself through large scale war when those who are in power decide to propagandize their way into the minds of the common folk. People are seen as tools to be used, rather than individuals with inherent dignities that are inviolable. We are seen as just being numbers. It is easier to digest for those in power to justify the atrocities they authorize, and commit by depersonalizing, and dehumanizing the public.

Whether we are fighting some form of war, or merely experiencing interpersonal conflict, we are manifesting violence through our actions. Violence allows for a numbing of the senses when it comes to neutralizing the rational mind. Here, once again, we see a primal aspect of humanity re-emerge from the depths of the subconscious into the conscious world. It doesn't matter if it is violence, or some other form of action because the result is the same; namely, that of avoidance of the inevitable truth of death.

When we fight against others, we are fighting against ourselves in a struggle that is profoundly psychological in nature. This psychological aspect is based on the idea that we substitute experiences, actions, and personal beliefs with the truth of our own mortality. We wish to deny death, and we do so defiantly while we fight against the world itself, destroying anything that is in our way. It is a sad state of affairs, but it is the inheritance of humanity that we experience life this way.

The tragedy of mankind is continuously observed by each one of us in a manner that burns itself into our subconscious minds. We participate actively in the world, yet we are also observers to the chaotic disorder that is objectivity. It is through objectivity that we realize our limitations run deeper than we originally imagined. Our subjective minds are full of imaginings, and scenarios that will never take place in the *real* world. All these things serve to make us quite frustrated because our will is clearly, and demonstrably limited.

The frustrations that we experience are a part of the great misfortune of consciousness because it reminds us of what we cannot do in this life. We are limited by our station, our environment, education, and who we know, as well as based on how economically well-off we are. These concerns add themselves to the chaos that exists in the objective world. Society has a tremendous pull on us in that we are destined to conform to a certain degree. This conformity is crushing to the individual because it limits the expression of desire formulated through the will.

In the final analysis of things, it seems as if there is no correct way to live to maximize the expression of the will. Because we are not able to do this, we become frustrated. We take our own disbelief of our own mortality out on the outside world through violent actions, confusion of thoughts, and (ironically) traditionalist beliefs. Any of these things (or a combination of them) is dangerous because it is disastrous for the individual in the end. When we violate others, we are relinquishing our own freedom of being through outward acts that take away the freedoms of others.

Tragedy is something that will befall all of us in the end, particularly with our deaths. We can justify (to ourselves) our lives with the comforts of knowing we have created some form of legacy, but this is limited in utility. In the moment of our dying breaths, will we truly think on all that we have created or is something more sinister awaiting us to surface from our subconscious mind? Just thinking of these possibilities brings a profound form of despair to the individual, because there is a realization that there is an ultimate ending to things that cannot be bargained with.

CHAPTER THIRTEEN

How can we transform ourselves in our present condition, while recognizing the need to evolve mentally?

As we continue to learn, and evolve cognitively, we must recognize the very real need to progress as individuals to create a sense of meaning to what might be possibly meaningless. This world is full of contradictions which make it easy to lose sight of the possibilities that we have as human beings. Yes, our death is inevitable, and yes it will destroy all semblance of what we once were in life, but there is something to creating meaning where there is none.

Traditional belief systems do not offer sufficient answers to the questions some of us have regarding the purpose of life. For many, these belief systems offer a stopgap whereby there is no longer any additional need for questioning. For others, it becomes impossible to look at life from a conventional point of view. In the summation of things, we must choose to live in the moment, and focus directly on self-creation while we do live. If we do not choose this path, we will likely end up in a slow form of self-annihilation through neglect of mental, and physical health.

We need to evolve mentally through focusing on those aspects of the human intellect that are creative in nature. It is through the arts, and sciences, that we can express ourselves in a manner that helps to quell the limitations of the will which desire cannot manifest. What I mean by this is that even though our will is limited, we can utilize our access to the subjective portions of our minds to make reality those desires which can only be abstractly displayed through the creative.

Why does a sense of meaning cause the individual to tolerate the suffering inherent in consciousness? There are several answers to that question, none of which are completely satisfactory. One answer may be that there is a subconscious sense of accomplishment when an individual creates something of perceived value during life. Death becomes less of a harsh blow to one who has created something in this world. Another answer is that there is a psychological element that must be addressed for there to be a more conclusive view regarding how we feel about dying. Still another answer is that we are desperate to cling onto anything that can quell the fear of the unknown within us.

If there is a subconscious sense of accomplishment, then there is an element of self-neutralization regarding the fear of death. This can be seen as a means whereby a cathartic release occurs during the creation of some form of art, or finding a scientific discovery. No matter what the source is, there is always a sense of post-creative release that intensifies the feeling of having accomplished something worthwhile. The subconscious mind becomes satiated with the ideals that are made reality, and even with a limited access to the will, provides a means by which individuals can set themselves free.

When we consider the psychological element regarding the creative, we can see that there is a profound depth to how we internalize accomplishment. There is something primal here that is being tapped into, specifically in relation to the dynamics behind human consciousness. The psychology of the individual is complex, malleable, and hard to define without deeper research into the meaning behind behaviors regarding the fear of death.

Our desperation to find answers where there are possibly none to be found keeps us at the very edge of mental collapse. We exist at times in a state of pure hopelessness regarding our own mortality. Our lot is such that even if we were to create, or partake in beneficial actions that lead to positive outcomes, we are still devoid of the knowledge as to whether there is a purpose to this life.

The subjective is powerful in that it relies not on the outside world, but on individual approximations of goals, ideals, passing thoughts, and potentialities. It is the essence of who we are as individuals because it represents those things which are possible even if they have not occurred. The subjective is fascinating to us because it is a representation of the construct of the self that we have become accustomed to believing in. All aspects of the subjective world are based on the various characteristics that our minds develop into. When we stop to dissect these characteristics from a rational point of view, we then can observe more carefully the origins of some of our deepest fears.

Fear, being an ancient primal emotion, takes over when we consider deeply our mortality. The objective world teaches us how to process what is happening on a scientific level, but it does not deal with the emotional aspect of death. The emotional aspects are relegated to the subjective because they require of us to process events from an abstract point of view. We are imprisoned by our emotions just as we are limited in expressing our will. When we consider this limitation, it is easy to despair, and not look at the greater picture of things.

Still, we can see a myriad of reasons why the subjective connects us with the outside world from a somewhat abstract perspective. We are complex creatures that suffer from an enigmatic ability to be in touch with the sentience we have inherited from our ancestors. I say that we suffer because that is what we are likely to ultimately end up experiencing one way or another in this life, whether it be mentally or physically. Suffering is our ultimate destiny in some way because that is what happens when we are forced to adapt to a brutal world.

The characteristics of subjectivism provide a means by which the individual is entangled within their own space of being. This space of being is represented through self-expression, and interaction with the objective world in daily life. As we mature throughout the years of our lives, we come closer to the realities that we must face regarding our own mortality. This perception is a negotiation with reality that must be faced alone.

Part of our development as sentient creatures involves a realization of those limitations which we have little to no control over. When we realize these things, we embrace either a form of inner peace or discord depending on the individual, and their disposition. The more we learn about ourselves, the deeper we come toward an understanding of life which may change from when we were younger. This is common knowledge, because everyone goes through stages, phases, and states of belief that evolve over time (at least to a degree).

Many of us go through an inner discord which becomes a full out battle for the purpose of life to be discovered. When we realize that there is no way to fully know the purpose, there is a return to the despair which began at the first realization of mortality in our lives. Some of us find an inner peace that is stoic in nature, and allows for us to continue living life even though we know we will eventually be obliterated by nature someday. It is possible that individuals can go through both phases, or aspects of being - both chaotic, and peaceful. This is another example of how opposing factors in life exist independently of one another, like the will to live, and die.

We also have the subconscious versus the conscious, as well as the subjective against the objective. In nature we see these patterns of opposites through phenomena such as night, and day, and temperate weather to disastrous storms. Everything has an opposing factor that must be considered in this world. The struggle to live itself is based on a fear of the opposite which is the drive toward death. Both exist at the same time, as previously mentioned, and both hold sway over the human spirit.

Nonetheless, it is important to consider also that since we are complex creatures, we possess a multitude of opposing factors within our minds. Our minds are powerful tools that can be used to communicate ideals, thoughts, potentialities, and the drive of the will toward fulfillment of desire. When we steer toward the ideals that allow us to flourish, and live, we are maximizing our limited will to its full potential. This is a positive thing because it counteracts the drive toward despair.

The inner subconscious mind attempts in a primitive way to soothe the individual from the various realizations of the insatiability of the will. The will, being voracious, is never satisfied, nor can it ever be in this world of limitations. There is also the act of surrender, meaning that when one focuses on a discipline to learn about the meaning behind life there is something that is sacrificed from the self. This is felt deeply by the individual going through this process of learning about themselves. It could be a relationship gone sour, or a career choice gone south; the topic doesn't really matter. Any of those things can affect us when we are searching for meaning.

Obsession can profoundly affect us when it comes to the subject of uncovering meaning from life. This is, of course, not healthy but it is something that happens naturally when one is focused on the disciplines of psychology, science, and general creativity. There is a narrowing down of searching for purpose through some form of logical pathway of thinking. When we consider this, it makes sense then that there are several ways that we can attempt to arrive at some form of purpose.

There is an instability to the mind that presents itself when the individual searches for purpose through any discipline. This instability is based on the concept that when there is great focus on one aspect of reality, there is an additional dysregulation that occurs causing a general neglect of other aspects of life. This is another tragedy of sentience that presents itself before us. We are not meant for extreme multitasking, especially when it comes to researching profound topics such as meaning.

Some of us may be affected by the subconscious in such a way that the substrate of our very being is forever changed. This is one of many changes that happens throughout our lives, but it is a significant one. For those who are affected, there is no basis or foundation where one can center themselves through, because there is an awareness of the insatiability of the will. Awareness brings further possible issues on a mental level, because the more we learn, the more we are cognizant of the extreme environment we find ourselves in.

By recognizing our limitations, we can move forward in a way that allows us to embrace the possibility of suffering being the primary experience of life, with pleasure taking a minor role in our journey through sentience. When we suffer, we are truly experiencing life because it is an active experience. It is not a desirable experience, but it is a profound one, nonetheless. This is not to say that suffering should be elevated to some high ideal of being, like some religions prescribe, but that it is something that it is a good idea to be aware of for the sake of our sanity. If we recognize suffering for what it is, a manifestation of objectivity through pain, we can see beyond our own position in life, and examine deeply those aspects of negative experiences.

Suffering allows us to become real with our emotions, and furthermore it continues to press us forward in life so that we can endure the unendurable. When suffering becomes something that is highly personal through tragic experiences such as a sudden illness of a loved one, or the loss of a good friend, we are given a chance to modify our priorities regarding life. By doing this, we are narrowing down those things which cause us grief, and examining our suffering from an objective lens. This objectivity keeps us focused on the search for authenticity, even if that is a concept best relegated to the subjective.

As we press onward in life through the tremendous pain we encounter, we find within us some aspect of survivalism which is beyond understanding. There are no words that can be put to this sort of aspect, except that it is the primitive expression of survivalism latent within humanity. The expression here is a blind struggle for the extension of life, even in the face of the inevitable.

When the self, being a construct, is challenged through the suffering experienced in life, there is a chance that the individual can go through the sensation of dissolution of being. What I mean by this is that there is a deconstruction of the self that decomposes through the various experiences of suffering in this life.

Both the impulse to live, and the drive toward death are the result of the tragedy of human consciousness. These primitive drives are not limited alone to humans, but they are pronounced in such a way that we can articulate them through intense emotions, and communication with others. The fact that we can communicate with others our subjective experiences shows that it is possible to see objectively the immense overall suffering of humanity.

When we expose our inner suffering, we can examine it from an objective point of view. Sometimes, however, it is difficult to expose this aspect of our lives because human language often fails to convey the exact nature of what suffering really entails. It is often a combination of mental, as well as physical pain that exists when dealing with suffering. This combination keeps us in a state of limbo where we are fluctuating our attention between the physical, and mental. To clarify, I mean that we are continuously focusing our deepest thoughts in between those states of mental, and physical pain.

The absence of pain does not mean that life is symmetrical in terms of whether it is worth experiencing all the suffering that we do go through. We have short term memories when it comes to our own suffering, because what we have experienced in the past often does not destroy us. Sometimes it does destroy us, and this is tragic, of course, but it is the result of an obsession that overtakes the individual in a tangible way.

The objective, and subjective work together to synthesize our experience as human beings. When we observe the suffering of others, we are often called in some inner way to assist mitigating the pain experienced by them. Whether this be through calling for help, or being of assistance in some way, there is a general empathy that exists between human beings that stems from a very intimate knowledge of suffering. This is not to say that there are those that do not display empathy regardless of their own suffering. This is not a universal rule regarding human behavior. What I do mean here is that, in general, we react to the suffering of others with some form of aid that is based on how we see the pain of others in ourselves.

CHAPTER FOURTEEN

A conclusion is needed to be drawn regarding the tragic condition of man, and the need to accept extinction as a solution.

"War is destruction. Our enemies massacre and burn, plunder and ruin, in a way that can be compared with nothing less than the fury and madness of the barbarians of old. So many human lives mown down, so many monuments and masterpieces of the past reduced to ashes, so much wealth destroyed, fill us with stupor and a sense of incurable sorrow and pain." – Emile Boutroux, *Philosophy and War.*

Boutroux is highlighting here the ultimate reality of war, and how it affects individuals on a personal level. Everyone in the center suffers a form of sorrow, pain, and anguish when dealing with the loss of many lives in a community. There is a disbelief in humanity that occurs, particularly due to the concept that death becomes a major reality for them. Death is then seen as being the ultimate force of misery among those who are survivors. It is also seen as a refuge, albeit in hushed tones, for it is through death that all suffering supposedly ends.

War is not merely a manifestation of violence on a massive scale, but it is a direct reflection of all those conflict that are present within each, and every individual on this planet. We are utterly broken when it comes to understanding one another, as we all possess varying degrees of incompatible belief systems that get in the way of true progress. Our prejudice becomes a deafening form of ignorance in the wake of the truth behind war which is the horror of death. It is in death that we finally receive a resolution to our concerns regarding pain, and suffering.

According to Dr. Freud in *Reflections on War and Death*, "Death is no longer to be denied; we are compelled to believe in it. People really die and no longer one by one, but in large numbers, often ten thousand in one day, it is no longer an accident. Of course, it still seems accidental whether a particular bullet strikes this man or that, but the survivor may easily be struck down by a second bullet, and the accumulation of deaths ends the impression of accident. Life has indeed become interesting again; it has once more received its full significance."

The closer we are to war, the nearer we are to the true face of humanity; that of perpetual violence through advancements of dichotomous ideals made reality through force. We experience this conflict within ourselves continuously throughout life, and it manifests occasionally in all out war in this world. When the wrong people possess an inordinate amount of power, there is a true manifestation of discord that forces itself into the fabric of reality. This discord comes from the subjective experiences of individuals, some of whom are filled with an inordinate amount of influence from the death drive.

It is not war alone that drives us toward madness, but it is merely a manifestation on a large scale of those conflicts that exist within each one of us. Extinction is one solution that provides a means by which we can relatively painlessly end the perpetual conflict between the living. It is a bleak option, or outlook, but it is one that has a basis in a very specific form of logic that views humanity in a less than favorable light. As Dr. Freud said, we cannot deny death any longer, for it is frequent in times of war, and it certainly is a part of our everyday reality.

We have a war to contend within ourselves daily, and this becomes manifest through our own doubts regarding the truth of purpose, or meaning in this life. It is through the conflicts that manifest themselves through us via our actions that the world is made all the poorer in retrospect. Death, being the reality that we must face, then becomes a form of action that we must physically cope with one way or another. In the throes of violence, we become intimate with the face of humanity.

We must reflect on the savagery of the world around us, in that primitivism clearly still exists among the human race. This is something that is a manifestation that is always present so long as we have existed in communion with one another. Anger is a useful trait, as it allows for there to be a force of conviction behind actions that would otherwise not be taken as seriously without an emphatic expression of emotions. It is however often used outside of a well-intentioned context, and translates into a form of violence that affects the outside world. Our subjective emotions again overtake us, and the sheer power of the will enforces these desires to act in the objective world.

Our base natures are often stronger than those aspects of the human mind that seeks to advance us into intellectual heights. Sometimes we are cruel, and keen enough to devise ways to harm others using technological means. This is obvious throughout the history of the 20th century, especially because of the invention, and use, of weapons of mass destruction against other human beings. The sheer force of death we have wreaked on the human race in the last century alone is incredibly impressive in a depressing way, because it shows the lengths to which we are capable.

Dehumanization often occurs as a result of the expansion of warring states, particularly in terms of ethnicity, ideology, or a combination of both. When this occurs, there is a viewing of persons as non-entities, or the *other* - individuals not considered fully human in some way. This allows the destruction of livelihood, property, and person to take place with little to no expression of empathy needed.

We must be willing to look at the history of mankind as something of an enigma filled with as much progress as it contains destruction. These experiences in the history of mankind are echoed throughout the minds of individuals who conflict with themselves on a mental level. We seem to not learn very much from our own history, especially when it comes to violence committed against others. It must be stated that if we do not seek extinction, we will eventually end up in that situation regardless.

The human condition begs to be liberated, but is instead shackled by the limitations of the conceptualization of free will. Our understanding of the will is skewered by misconceptions, as well as a preference for ignoring that it is indeed not fully free. I have written extensively about the conception of the will in my prior work, *Essay on the Limitations of Free Will,* however I will elaborate enough to make lucid our understanding of why the will matters to human sentience.

The will is limited because there are objective obstacles in our way which vary from person to person. Some of these obstacles are minimal, while others are ever present for the individual. Each of these aspects of limitation affects individuals differently depending on one's station in life. Our desires, which manifest the will from within, are often cast to the side, or deemed as being too unrealistic. This creates a frustration for the individual that is seeking to act upon a sense of self-agency.

Because we know our will is limited, we are thrown into another psychological challenge which adds additional suffering for each one of us to bear. Now we must contend with the fact that our lives are based on a limited number of days to live, as well as the fact that our will is limited. This creates a complex scenario for the individual which cannot be resolved through means that are traditional in any way. What I mean by this is that we must contend with the dichotomous situations we find ourselves in, as well as the problems that befall us regarding the will, and mortality.

We are indeed enslaved by our will, the forces of the outside world, society, our own mortality, and through the conflicts we experience through other persons. The will, being relegated to a controlled manifestation of desire, is never satiated. The forces of the outside world represent the station in life we find ourselves in. Society presents itself as a boon to the individual, but is a construct that dampens the human spirit. It is through other persons that we discover that we cannot perform certain actions, for there are other interests in the objective world that we must contend with.

It is through emotions that we can face our deepest fears which are inclusive of having the same nightmare as everyone else. We exist in this dystopia through a continual fight against dissolution, but we do so at the disadvantage of forgetting just how mortal we truly are. It is as if we are characters in a story where the reader can gleam more of the truth than the actual protagonist. The truth of existence is right before us, yet we cannot see the fact that our emotions are transformed into other individuals because we all experience the same emptiness.

"But no: he was empty, he was confronted by a vast anger, a desperate anger, he saw it and could almost have touched it. But it was inert – if it were to live and find expression and suffer, he must lend it his own body. It was other people's anger." – Jean-Paul Sartre, *The Age of Reason.*

It is said that someday there will be one final person to utter our names before forever being forgotten. This day comes sooner than later for most of us, while others just have to wait a while longer once the waters of time wash themselves over our tombs. As our own emotions are reflected in the outside world through other individuals, we somehow live on through others in a way that is haunting. We often haunt the world around us through our anger, self-deception, and lack of inner fortitude to seek out the truth. These things are echoed throughout the rest of humanity because they are common threads of being which are not in the least unique.

Reflection upon death is a liberating force that works within the individual through continual practice, and internal contemplation. It is liberating in that it allows us to truly be who we are as human beings; namely, mortal (and unfortunately sentient) creatures. Nevertheless, we are most cognizant of who we are when we do reflect on death, and this is so because it places all our works in perspective with eternity. It is through the focus on our place in the universe, albeit miniscule, that allows us to truly contemplate the mysteries of our own deaths. This does not negate our existence, and our own personal search for meaning. In the final judgment of things, it is through the morbid that we enter a level of authenticity.

The despair, pain, and suffering of life outweighs the moments of pleasure which are fleeting. This is evident in everyday events that occur throughout the world which we read in the news. Those few moments of pleasure are no doubt almost enough to justify this existence of many dolorous situations were it not for the fact that again, one day we shall die. Not only do we have to deal with pain in this life, but we also must die. Our lowly station in life in comparison to the cosmos is mind boggling. Even the most well-off individuals are emotionally empty inside when considering the staggering gigantism of the universe. We are surrounded by misery, but we do not see just how bad our situation is because we are blinded by our diversions and interests that are temporal at best, and deceptive at worst.

Many of us work, toil, and scrape to get by in this world, and for what reason? To *make* some sort of living, perhaps? Maybe it is to justify our existence in this world, and our place in it as individuals. Nonetheless, we are often forced into our stations in life. We do have the possibility of climbing the social ladder, and moving forward in a way that provides a level of comfort for us, but this is also limited by our station since birth.

Our circumstances dictate where we find ourselves in this world, and it is not without great sweat, labor, and suffering that we are able to attain a modicum of the desires we have for our lives. Even once we are positioned in a *good* place, there is a substantial emptiness that surrounds us on a psychological level. The more we have, the less we realize just how much we should appreciate those things which lead to less suffering.

Once again, contemplation on death is an active meditative choice, and this is something that can help channel psychological peace through an acceptance of our situation. Mortality is the great equalizer, where all men, and women, find themselves at the mercy of someday. What we do here, in the current moment, is what is going to allow us to find some form of psychological resignation in our final hours. We must live in the current moment to establish a form of sanity for ourselves, because we would otherwise go mad in the realization of our eventual oblivion.

When despair interacts with the will, there is a form of consolidation of idealism with the subjective. There is a manifestation of this through behavior, as well as in actions taken by the individual. Our everyday interaction with the outside world demonstrates this behavior in such a way that there is a solidification of relation between the subjective, and objective. What I mean by this is that since despair informs the will, we display this through our actions, some of which involve violent tendencies, or self-harm through maladaptive behavior. This of course is a description of the extreme of human behavior, of which each of us has the inner ability to manifest in the outside world through unhinged conduct.

I have discussed the theory that despair, and suffering outweigh the so-called positive experiences we have through pleasurable experiences. I stand by this theory, because it is evident that there is tremendous suffering in this world that many unfortunately experience daily. Whether it be through psychological torment, physical disability, or a combination of both states, there is an incredible emptiness that exists in this experience we call life.

When we create life, we are taking responsibility for the death of others. We consume an inordinate number of resources on this planet, and continue to cause an incredible amount of suffering to other creatures around us. Both these situations are ethical problems, as well as socially engaging philosophical issues to be addressed. The whole of humanity is engorged in a writhing existence of creation, joy, suffering, and death. This is a form of chaos that surrounds us because we are constantly in-between states of each one of these aspects of existence in our lives.

The great tragedy of sentience boils down to this; that we exist in multiple states of dichotomous aspects of being, and are continuously aware of our eventual deaths. Meaning can be created through individual effort, but there is no avoiding the pain, and suffering that eventually come for us in this life. If we consider the truth of our plight in this world, we can come to realize that though we are destined for the grave, we can somehow leave some form of trace that we struggled, and ultimately lived.

Conclusion

(Section A)

The human condition forces us to become creative by looking deeply into our subconscious mind.

We are at a crossroads in humanity where we need to see our mortality in a light that is more profound than ever before. This light is based on rational thought, logic, and an exploration of the subjective. When we combine all three of these things, we are more likely than not to find some way toward a sense of personal meaning. Our sense of personal meaning is furthermore based on gathering evidence of some inner purpose that dictates where we will go in the future.

The focus on mythology, and ancient religious traditions sometimes softens the blow of dying, but not for everyone. Each tradition holds some clue to the deeper meaning of what death represents but not fully. The mysteries of life, and dying are found in pieces of each primitive rite performed in this world at any given time. It is up to us to find our bearings regarding the clues that we receive from the world's great traditions.

The dreaming state is one in which we are always aware of death, as this is intimately connected to the subconscious mind. Our evening ritual of symbolism through dreams brings forward many clues regarding our attitudes toward death. When we attempt to analyze our dreams, we can find a better understanding of our own personal subjective world. This allows for further self-investigation through reflection, and personal attention to one's own inner life. In the final judgment of things, we are responsible for our own attention to details.

Meaning is found through having the courage to realize that we might falter in our steps toward purpose in this life. Regardless of where we find ourselves, our situation does not dictate our attitude toward our present or future selves. We are confronted daily with the prospect of our own deaths, but even more so, our lives which lay before us. This confrontation we experience is profound in that it guides us toward a more solid vision of what we wish to become. In a world of post-truth, this is the closest we can get toward reaching personal freedom and self-agency. By following this inner guide, we can eliminate all those things which are superfluous to our manifestation of our will.

Reflection allows us to realize the truth behind our lack of ability to fathom our deaths save for the experience of loss we have through others that have departed this life. It is through the loss of others that we are engaged directly in a form of self-reflection that is often inescapable. Since we are forced to view ourselves as something less than what we assumed we were, we soon come to realize that we are extremely fragile creatures indeed. We can easily succumb to disease, illness, or any form of mental distress at any given time. This should keep us humble, yet it only seems to do so when we are amid the loss we are experiencing.

We must be willing to see grief as highly personal to the individual. Not one person experiences grief the same way. The subjective experience of the individual informs us directly of the loss that we go through, and it expresses itself in a very nuanced way. My experience of grief, and loss, is going to be profoundly different from yours simply because it is filtered through the subjective mind. We can see the world from an objective point of view (to a degree), but we are not able to fully translate our understanding into anything meaningful outside of the subjective processing we go through in these times.

There is a responsibility to take control over those things that our will can make reality in the objective world. It is through the will that we find ourselves engulfed inside an inner voice screaming into the abyss of subjectivity. The will is continuously vying for power over the streams of desire an individual experiences at any given moment.

It is through the denial of the will that we realize the power behind self-annihilation through mental processes. What I mean by this is that since we are limited in the expression of the will into a form of action, we are at the mercy of those few things we can express via the will. By realizing this, our will is effectively denied in some respects, as it can never be fully free. A history of loss informs the individual, and can cause existential grief that is difficult to heal. Time may have some factoring to do with the mitigation of suffering, but for many this is not enough.

Our sympathy for those who have come before us informs us of how we should take our lives seriously. We learn through personal histories, as well as our general education about the world around us through the lives, and deaths of countless who have lived before our time. Some lived in squalor, while others counted their days idly until they passed away in some comfortable habitation. All of them died, and were eventually forgotten by the sands of time, save for our occasional remembrance of a vague story we heard regarding their lives. Those who we have recently lost are more vivid in our memories, but soon enough, given time, there will only be a distorted vision of who we once knew.

Those who have suffered throughout history share the story of humanity which is of great tribulation, and internal conflict. We suffer on levels that are often proportionate to our genetic histories, environment, and history of immune weaknesses which we have inherited from relatives. All these things combine to form some manner of direction as to where we may find ourselves in this life. We can, of course, break the mold as it were, and excel in some form of useful life skillset. Nonetheless, we do have some limitations brought forward by our own combination of infirmities as individuals.

The self, as it is a construct, allows us to look beyond our limitations, and realize that we are a complex combination of genetics, environment, and social factors. As I just mentioned, we are limited to a degree by these factors, but are not necessarily always beholden to them. There are aspects of our individual experience that allow for progression in a temporal sense via skills, education, and advancement on an intellectual level. These are all important things; however, it must be said that in the summation of this argument that there is an extreme limitation existing for each one of us.

Dr. Jung, in *Modern Man in Search of a Soul*, brings up the point that since we have turned away from our primitive nature we are bound to consciousness. We cannot control whether we experience consciousness as it is, but we can realize that there is a connection between the primitive, and where we are today as individuals.

Theological considerations are not enough for everyone to attend to seriously, as that aspect of thought is specious at best for many. How is it then that we are to consider the possibilities that might exist for us as a collective whole? We have science to look to for objective truths found through logic, and reason, yet at the same time we find ourselves in a nebulous position that is influenced by the subjective experience of being. This experience is powerful because of the idea that we are solely responsible for finding meaning in a cold, and indifferent world.

Culture often dictates the nature of our religious, and social beliefs regarding death, and dying. When we shed ourselves of those beliefs, through shocking experiences, or through intellectual searching, we are exposed to a world that is far more indifferent than we originally had imagined. This world is connected to both the experiences of subjective internalizations, as well as the external objective world, and how we interact with it.

The cultural milieu has a negative influence on the individual because it forms aspects of the personality that is attached to conventionality in thinking, which is not always beneficial. The easy way to view things is to fall back on one's own upbringing for answers to difficult questions, but this can easily backfire. We can find ourselves stranded emotionally, psychologically, and intellectually when it comes to being shocked by the truth of any situation that appears before us that does not coincide with our traditional beliefs.

Coming to terms with meaninglessness allows us to paradoxically create meaning. This is a concept that I have already written about extensively because I am trying to point out the likelihood of this happening to many at some point in life. Should it really be surprising that there is no grand scheme for us to follow toward purpose in this life? Let us then, rage into the world with our passion, and turn the indifference of the universe into personal victory. This is possible, and preferrable, for the realization of this can meaningless can also create a void of purpose in the individual.

Conclusion

(Section B)

Life after a death can be a completely consciousness altering experience.

We exist in a post-modern society that demands our attention upon the objective, as well as the subjective experiences that we go through. We can no longer hide behind primitive ways of thinking alone, but must utilize subtlety, and nuance, in our discoveries of purpose for ourselves. Certainly, it is advisable to look back to those systems of belief, and ideal; simply to elucidate just how far one has come without those systems. What I mean by this is that we must be willing to examine our core beliefs for us to manifest a truly organically discovered purpose for our lives.

Science can teach us fundamental laws regarding dying, and the biological processes leading up to death. This is a positive thing, because it allows us to have a basis of understanding for what happens to us in a physical way. Our physical dying process, and the knowledge of it, is necessary for a full understanding of the human experience. Since we do not experience the dying process for ourselves until whenever it happens to be our time, we do not possess a full understanding of this experience.

Primitive man, in the struggle for existence, forever forged a deep psychological impact on all humanity. This is true because we never stop struggling until we are dead. There is no measure of peace in this world that allows us to feel truly fulfilled, because of how temporary those measures are when compared to the length of one's own life. This is something that we simply must come to terms with. The sooner we do, the better for us, because it will allow us to examine more authentically the truth behind our existence.

The primitive psyche must be attended to so that there can be a confrontation between the subjective, and objective worlds. This has been established in that I have pointed out the necessity of us experiencing these things in our post-modern world. We cannot turn our eyes away from unpleasant experiences, or knowledge of them, because if we do, we are denying the very essence of what it means to be human. Conflicts, and wars all rage around us at any given time, and we must bear the brunt of its effects on us through a psychological sort of terror. This is so because we are not naturally meant to be as advanced as we have become.

Sentience is a responsibility that must be considered as both a benefit, and a curse to the individual because of all that it entails. We are simultaneously complex, and primitive, in our expression of being as humans in this world. This much has been established. What we must also realize is that we need to navigate through a world of dichotomies that act against our own personal interests. These dichotomies can range from the subjective to the objective, internalized consciousness versus outward behavior, and more.

We are far more aware of our surroundings than other species because of our ability to formulate advancements in reason, logic, and science. These are all great things, but at the same time it is also a baggage that we must carry. The knowledge we have of life, and death, is no laughing matter, especially when we have come to such firsthand intimate knowledge of it through education, and experience.

Art transforms agony through the utilization of the creative spark that exists within each one of us. When we are in the act of creating something, we are expressing extremely intimate personal desires, dreams, and subjective experiences to the outside world. This is something that is not to be taken lightly, because it is a manifestation of fragile inner motivations that can easily be criticized by others. To expose oneself through the arts allows for there to be a certain emotional maturity to develop over time.

The arts, being a projected manifestation of the inner desires of the will made reality, allow for us to express ourselves in a way that helps to mitigate the suffering we will eventually go through in the dying process. Any form of therapy, especially tactile, can assist the individual through the trauma of experiencing loss, or one's own demise. There is the added benefit that others may learn of our works long after we are gone, leaving us with a legacy of sorts to help us in our final days. This, of course, is temporary, and even our greatest creations will one day be forgotten along with everyone else. Perhaps our greatest legacy will be found in the way we individually create some form of impression on the world through art.

There is a confrontation with the great tragedy of existence when contemplating on our own mortality. The modicum of joy that we receive from life is based on those spaces between suffering that almost make us forget the worst that can happen to us in life. The dichotomy between the will to live, and the death drive is always strong. The evidence for this is found in the fact that we are continuously battling ourselves on a psychological level to survive, and at times, succumbing to the desire to self-annihilate through self-harm.

Emil Cioran, in a *Short History of Decay,* points out that beyond appearances, there is not a true equality in the so-called symmetry of existence between pleasure, and pain. There is an asymmetry, and it shows itself through the illusions that society offers as truths. Amid this often sudden and tremendous suffering that we call life experience there is a modicum of pleasure to be had, but it is certainly outweighed by those things which work against us. To explain more clearly, it is through life experiences that we find ourselves often in the throes of pain rather than pleasure.

This asymmetry is stark in its application to a human life, because of all the ways that our experiences can generate suffering for us to survive. This is where I also want to point out that it is, in this author's opinion, better that the world would collectively decide on extinction rather than allow for this asymmetry to continue. Our experience in life is where we must look to in finding answers for our suffering, and whether it is worth living, or no.

When we examine closely the implications of what extinction would do for us, we realize that it is the elimination of suffering completely. Of course, this action would be unconscionable if it were to happen with any modicum of additional suffering that could be avoided. Unless we are technologically advanced enough to facilitate such an extinction, it is not advisable for this to theoretically take place. Nonetheless, the logical answer to whether we should continue on as a species (in the face of the suffering we experience) is no.

Suicide, according to Peter Wessel Zapffe in *The Last Messiah*, is something spiritual that must be respected. When we look at how others who go before us choose to end their lives, we realize just how profound the despair of existence can be. The great dichotomies that tear us apart on a fundamental level are sometimes too much for individuals to handle. We are wired for survival, but there is an aspect to our existence that calls to the abyss from wherever we are.

The arts are open to all subjects, especially those dealing with mortality, and the experience of dying. We must be willing to look at subject matter that is hard to deal with, such as suicide (as it relates to the arts), because it allows for us to expand our minds beyond the sphere of subjectivity we experience daily. Suicide, as a form of self-agency through the choice to end one's own life, has been expressed in the arts symbolically, and viscerally throughout history. It is still a taboo in many cultures, because of the so-called divine law against it.

Art, as mentioned before, is a form of catalyst that can provide a sense of meaning to life beginning from those inner spaces of the subconscious. The subconscious can bring forth ideas that turn into ideals, and manifest themselves in the objective world as subjective works of art. Others can utilize our creations to communicate with us, and find some ground of purpose, or meaning in the work itself. When we participate in the act of creation through artistic intent, there is a powerful manifestation of non-spoken communicative abilities that we gain throughout life.

Of course, there is no foolproof way for there to be a set of meanings, or purposes in this world other than natural law. We must make these things up as we go along, because that is what our nature prompts us to do. There must be an awareness, however, of our abilities as individuals to create meaningful experiences for there to be a practical use for them. If we were not aware of our abilities, how would we try to improve our skill sets through the creation of some work of art? It would seem impossible for us to do anything worthwhile if we did not have some foundation or ability to work from.

Conclusion

(Section C)

Our reliance on culture to inform us on our attitudes toward suffering is often an unhealthy one.

When we meditate on the existence of suffering, we realize, as previously mentioned, that this is an additional testimony to the tragedy of sentience. It exists not just within us, but for all humanity in varying degrees. Suffering can be physical, mental, or caused by a combination of both amid the environmental objectivity we find ourselves in. Mental suffering is not only subjective but something that is just as real as physical suffering. When in the presence of both, it is difficult to consider the idea that we would wish to continue living with such pain.

War is an externalization of internal conflicts which have expanded into the objective world in a way that dehumanizes others. This is another aspect of the tragedy of sentience in that it requires us to realize there are many levels of dichotomous opposites within us. When we engage in battle, we are not only fighting for survival, but destroying others in the process. Furthermore, when we destroy others, we take something sacred from ourselves, and a part of us also dies with it.

Violence is an externalization of internal tendencies toward self-annihilation. We see in others what we hate in ourselves. This, of course, is all subconscious when one is in the act of doing something violent. Anger, though at times justified, can be a means by which the individual loses a sense of humanity through the dehumanization process. All that exists in the state of anger is chaos, and ferocity of self-expression.

Conflict informs how we interact with the outside world. The battle within us toward self-annihilation or survival is profound. Ethical concerns about the self-agency of an individual invite conversations regarding the choice to end one's own life.

When we consider the limitations of the will, we must also be prepared to see things from the point of view that the death drive is as powerful as the will to live. Our grip on reality as we know it grows stronger through the realization that all things are temporal. A reliance on culture to inform us on our attitudes toward death is often an unhealthy one.

Actions toward others inform us internally on how we should reverence ourselves in a manner that is cognizant of death. Death is a representation that is manifested as a manifold expression of despair, incoherence, and confrontation with the ultimate of truths.

To reiterate what I had discussed earlier, life is filled with a constant struggle towards pleasure in the intervals of pain, suffering, and unfulfilled desires. Death is the ultimate answer toward whether there will be an end to this struggle. Confronting this obvious truth is often profound, and highly personal in nature. Culture often distorts our ability to see clearly just how cognizant we should be about our mortality because it is the only way to stay in touch with reality.

The unfulfilled portion of our will helps to create an atmosphere of despair for the individual experiencing this. Picking up the pieces of a shattered support system can be profoundly difficult. Culture often does not have sufficient resources to assist individuals who have gone through immense suffering on a psychological level.

The constant awareness of our suffering, and of potential suffering keeps us enslaved by our own predicament. Actions toward others inform us internally on how we should reverence ourselves in a manner that is cognizant of death. Our behaviors, especially surrounding morality, are often the result of natural inclinations rather than ideological theories that are applied to everyday life such as those espoused by the various religions of the world. When we act in a manner that is egalitarian, we are honoring the inner sanctity of the idea of personhood, and freedom. Though we are never truly able to understand what unlimited freedom means, we can find some peace through our interactions with others during our daily lives.

Conclusion

(Section D)

Death is the ultimate answer toward whether there will be an end to this struggle called life. Confronting this obvious truth is often profound, and highly personal in nature.

The unfulfilled portion of our will helps to create an atmosphere of despair for the individual experiencing this. Death expresses itself through those moments of anguish within us by prompting us to think toward those moments of dying which we will eventually experience.

Death is a representation that is manifested as a manifold expression of despair, incoherence, and confrontation with the ultimate of truths. There is no reason behind its manifestation other than the natural laws that have been established long before our births. We are continuously surrounded by death in a way that is profound, but we do not recognize it when we see it. What I mean by this is that someone we know has either died, or is dying, or will die, in the future. We will experience that grief at some point, and it will surround us with its atmosphere for longer than we would wish it to.

We represent many different things, many of which have their opposites. According to Immanuel Kant, in the *Critique of Pure Reason*, "Every representation contains something manifold, which could not be represented as such, unless the mind distinguished the time in the succession of one impression after another; for as contained in one moment, each representation can never be anything but absolute unity." What we project we represent at that moment in full, though there are complexities to us as individuals that we do not show simultaneously. This is another of the great tragedies of sentience; that though we are complex, we show ourselves to the world and subconsciously as one dimensional.

Our despair on the limitations of the will is another symptom of the tragedy of sentience. In post-modern society, we must learn to take part in those functions which improve the quality of life, even though it is still appalling. The great tragedy of sentience is unearthed in a manifold of different aspects regarding the unconscious, the objective, the known, and unknowable. We must be willing to accept that our position in this life is based on a complexity of dichotomies acting against one another.

The tragedy of sentience is also found in those conflicts that exist between the conscious, and unconscious focus on opposites which are continuously present in this life. There are endless dichotomies that exist, as previously mentioned here, that serve only to fragment the psychological foundations of individuals. This is the order through chaos that life throws at us in every direction. We are constantly at the mercy of the causal through environmental, social, and biological processes.

We struggle, we fight, and we continue to survive against tremendous odds thrown at us by this life. We still somehow carry on, and continue onward in life as if our struggle made any sense.

Perhaps the purpose of this life is based on creating meaningful experiences when there are no objective truths regarding this.

To echo what I had discussed earlier, life is filled with a constant struggle towards pleasure in the intervals of pain, suffering, and unfulfilled desires. Death is the ultimate answer toward whether there will be an end to this struggle. Confronting this obvious truth is often profound, and highly personal in nature.

Making conscious those things which are unfulfilled in the will of the individual allows for a furtherance of the objectivity of the limitations we find ourselves in. Idleness brings us closer to the truth about unfulfilled desires. The will itself is manifested as desire stemming from the unconscious to the conscious mind.

In the result of living a full life, we all shall one day perish. By a full life, I do not mean a fulfilling one, or one that has a necessary expiry date. What I am trying to say here is that there are laws of nature which we must undoubtedly follow irrespective of our willingness to survive. This is the law of nature. What is most tragic about mankind is that we are scared, lonely creatures on a planet that we are slowly destroying every day. We have our interests, our occupations, and our dreams to attend to, but one day all these things will fade away. That is the greatest tragedy of sentience.

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BIOGRAPHY

Thomas Sheldon MacDonald is the author of ten books largely dealing with poetics, philosophy, and surrealism. He is a graduate of Miami Dade College, and is continually pursuing knowledge through education as well as independent study. His philosophy is focused on concepts of non-being through processing internal experiences in a rational way. Thomas grew up in a small town in Massachusetts, and is currently residing in Miami, Florida. He lives with his wife Claudia, his mother-in-law, and a wonderful cat named Lydia. Currently, Thomas is working toward his bachelor's in Applied Sciences at Miami Dade College, pursuant to higher education. When not studying assiduously, Thomas enjoys the time spent with his loved ones whenever possible.

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Thomas Sheldon MacDonald.

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